CORALINE

screenplay by Henry Selick

based on the book by Neil Gaiman

2nd rewrite polish

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EXT. OLD ESTATE HOUSE, PACIFIC NORTHWEST - DAY

BACK YARD, patchy light, cool for late summer. Through the fast-shutter EYES OF A CAT, we study a tiny LIZARD doing push-ups on a rock. We MOVE IN, ever closer, ready to pounce. A CHUGGING sound grows behind us and the lizard BOLTS. We WHIP around to study the back of a huge old weather-worn QUEEN ANNE STYLE HOUSE. No one there...

We RACE through the grass and around the house, LEAP onto a STONE WALL then SCRAMBLE into the dense branches of a GREAT LARCH TREE. We CREEP forward and, as the branches open, stop. A "Massive Movers" MOVING VAN is parked below in the circular gravel drive with two MASSIVE MOVERS wrenching the loading ramp out the back.

ANGLE ON FRONT PORCH

Long-time residents MISS SPINK and MISS FORCIBLE sit on wicker chairs. Round, rouged and English, they feed bits of FRUIT CAKE to three Scottish TERRIERS. A dirty JEEP CHEROKEE with Michigan plates pulls into the drive and the elderly ladies stand up and wave.

MISS SPINK
Welcome to Ashland, Mrs. Jones!

MISS FORCIBLE
Shakespeare's home away from home, Mr. Jones!

TOGETHER
Welcome, welcome, young Caroline Jones!

ON CAR

KAREN and BARRY JONES, late 30's, climb out. It's been a long drive. They mount the front steps, and shake hands with the ladies.

KAREN JONES
Please – just Karen and Barry. And you must be--

BARRY JONES
Wait, don't tell me...

Barry, thin glasses on his nose and a bald spot on the back of his head, pretends to concentrate deeply. He points first at one lady...

BARRY JONES (cont'd)
Miss Spink!

(CONTINUED)

...then the other.

BARRY JONES (cont'd)
And Miss Forcible! Am I right, or am I right?

The ladies titter, nodding.

MISS SPINK
Oh, a writer *and* a mentalist.

Karen, pretty but plain with short-chopped hair and not a spot of makeup, smiles.

KAREN JONES
We both write. And our daughter is called *Coraline*.

The Jeep's back door opens and out hops a twelve-year-old girl.

CAT'S EYE VIEW

CORALINE, dressed semi-goth but with hits of color, is tall and striking for her age, with a very high metabolism. She has a look of determined curiosity that says, "I will not be bored!" A sudden CLATTER turns her head.

ON MOVERS

The big lugs have dropped a huge tangle of shiny GARDENING TOOLS off the truck.

ON PORCH

BARRY JONES
Uh, NEED SOME HELP, GUYS?
(to Miss Spink and Forcible)
Excuse us, ladies; Karen?

They leave to direct the movers as Coraline joins Miss Spink and Forcible and nods "hello". They offer her some fruitcake.

MISS SPINK
Go on then, have a bite.

Coraline, always hungry, takes a big one and blanches: it tastes like bark dust. A begging Scotty dog offers to help.

MISS FORCIBLE
(pointing to house)
We've got the downstairs.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS FORCIBLE (cont'd)
Eleven years so far, came for the theater and never left!

MISS SPINK
You see, Caroline, both myself and Miss Forcible were famous actresses in our time.

MISS FORCIBLE
Trod the boards on three continents and one troop ship at sea!

Dog starts to CHOKE on Coraline's fruitcake.

MISS SPINK
Oh, don't let Hamish eat so much fruit cake, luvvy, he'll be up all night with his tummy.

CORALINE
It's Coraline. Not Caroline. Coraline.

The UPSTAIRS NEIGHBOR, an ECCENTRIC OLD MAN with a big moustache and Eastern European accent, calls down from his rickety outside stairs:

OLD MAN UPSTAIRS
One day, little Caroline, when they are all ready, everyone in the whole world will see the wonders of my "Jumping Mouse Circus".
(cupping ear)
You ask me why you cannot see it now. Is that what you asked me?

CORALINE
No, I asked you not to call me Caroline. It's Coraline.

OLD MAN UPSTAIRS
The reason you cannot see my circus, is that the jumping mice are not yet ready and rehearsed. Also, they refuse to play the songs I have written for them. My songs go *oompah oompah*. But they will only play *toodle oodle*, like that. I am thinking of trying them on different types of cheese.

Coraline looks skeptically at the Old Man when the movers VEER DANGEROUSLY CLOSE with a huge COMPUTER DESK. Coraline's father RACES UP to steady the load.

CONTINUED: (3)

CORALINE'S FATHER
Whoa, whoa, that's my favorite desk!

Coraline glowers at him.

CORALINE'S FATHER (cont'd)
And my favorite daughter.

They just manage to squeeze through the front door. Coraline's mother follows, holding a DESK LAMP in each hand.

ON LADIES AND CORALINE

Miss Forcible becomes fretful.

MISS FORCIBLE
We forgot to tell her, April!

MISS SPINK
Really, Miriam? *My* memory's sharp as a needle.
(to Coraline)
You look the curious type, am I right, dearie?

Coraline is intrigued by the question.

CORALINE
Well, I like to explore a little, check things out.

MISS SPINK
Of course you do. But you'll need to look out for the old well--

MISS FORCIBLE
Dangerously deep!

MISS SPINK
--somewhere on the back property.

MISS FORCIBLE
(hisses)
Could be anywhere!

MISS SPINK
Promise us you'll keep away from it?

CAT'S EYE ANGLE ON CORALINE

Feeling the gaze, Coraline suddenly looks right at CAMERA.

CONTINUED: (4)

HER POV

A LARGE BLACK CAT vanishes in the larch branches.

CORALINE (O.S.)
Oh, I promise...

TIME CUT TO:

MONTAGE, EXT. OLD ESTATE - NEXT DAY

Coraline, wearing a red hat, black jumper, T shirt and red hiking boots, holds a homemade DOWSING ROD - forked stick used to "divine" water — and pretends to let it "tug" her around the back yard and grounds in her search for the well.

OLD ROSE GARDEN - SAME

Coraline steps very carefully as she pokes through stunted, bug-eaten rose-bushes. She pauses, her stick pointing at a large BOX TURTLE.

MOSSY ROCK GARDEN - SAME

Coraline looks for crawly things beneath the stones. She PRIES UP a piece of shale and finds a bright TIGER SALAMANDER. She's fascinated, loving its strong yellow and black pattern.

BROKEN-UP TENNIS COURT - SAME

Coraline WACKS PINECONES over a rotted net with the dowsing rod. A PORCUPINE pokes his snout out from a burrow at Center Court then ducks down.

DRIED-UP GOLDFISH POND - SAME

Coraline lifts a SNAKESKIN into frame on the end of her dowser. There's a LARGE STONE FROG in the middle of the pond.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD ESTATE, OVERGROWN MEADOW BY TREES - MAGIC HOUR

Coraline steps into a circle of SQUIDGY BROWN TOADSTOOLS in front of a TREE STUMP. She's fascinated by the near perfect pattern.

Out of nowhere, the BLACK CAT LEAPS onto the TREE STUMP. STARTLED, Coraline loses her balance and falls seat first on three huge mushrooms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
(wrinkling her nose)
Yucko, what a smell!

She stands, wiping the STINKY FUNGUS off her clothes and admonishes the cat.

CORALINE (cont'd)
You know, instead of scaring me, you could help me find the old well.

The cat GLARES at her with GREEN EYES, ready to slip away at the slightest provocation. She explains gently:

CORALINE (cont'd)
(quieter)
I have to know where it is, in order to keep away from it.

She grasps the forked end of her water stick.

CORALINE (cont'd)
The magic dowser says...

She closes her eyes and points the tip of the rod in the air, tracing a figure eight. A sudden voice from behind surprises her.

VOICE
GOOD JAM!

Coraline spins back to see a BACK-LIT BOY about twelve or thirteen sitting on a jerry-built ELECTRIC SCOOTER with a huge motor and battery and big knobby tires. He's dressed in a big old fireman's coat and wrestling sneakers. He climbs off to walk over, his posture terrible with shoulders hunched, interesting face angled down.

CORALINE
(tries for funny)
Uh, if you're here about a fire, I'm afraid I'm--

He GRABS the dowsing rod from Coraline, aims it around, examines it, and speaks VERY QUICKLY.

BOY
Water witching, yow!. How's it work? Rare earth magnets, some kind of moisture-induced electrical field? I bet you're from Texas or New Mexico; someplace really dry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She takes the dowsing rod back.

CORALINE
I hate to disappoint you, but--

BOY
D'you know you're standing in a fairy ring?

She looks down skeptically at the mushroom circle.

CORALINE
And that would be--

BOY
Some kind of mini-mosh pit, I think, where the fairies dance like drunken maniacs.

He steps around her to the stump, crouches down and starts to scratch the black cat behind his ears.

CORALINE
Huh. So, do you and your cat <u>always</u> ambush people or is it just m--?

BOY
He's not exactly *my* cat, he's kind of feral, you know; wild? Though, of course, I do feed him almost every night and sometimes he'll come in my window and snooze on my bed.

The cat purrs like a diesel motor. The boy uses his hand to illustrate what he next describes:

BOY (cont'd)
Can you imagine having separately focusable ears or built-in night vision or retractable claws? Clever little predators, of course they're no match for the coyotes back where you're from. I've even heard that--

Coraline is losing her patience.

CORALINE
Look: I'm not from Texas, I'm from Michigan; I don't believe in fairies; and if I'm a water witch, then--

Coraline SLAPS the dowsing rod against her leg, so the tip points straight down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CORALINE (cont'd)
--where's the secret well?

BOY
Exactly!

He grabs a saucer-sized PIECE OF SLATE and starts scraping away at the ground between the toadstools. His digging quickly reveals a ROW OF THICK REDWOOD PLANKS. There's a hollow sound when he raps one with the stone.

BOY (CONT'D)
It's here alright. Supposed to be so deep that if you fell in and looked up from the bottom, you'd see a night sky full of stars in the middle of the day.

This is the first thing he's said that Coraline likes. She half-smiles and the black cat tilts his head, noticing.

The boy lifts a dirty hand to shake.

BOY (CONT'D)
You're one of the new people, right?

She nods.

BOY (CONT'D)
I'm Wybie* Lovat, lived around here forever. In fact, my grandmother was born and raised in the big house.

CORALINE
Wybie?

WYBIE
Short for Wybourne**, lumpy old family name. Not my idea, of course. What'd your parents saddle you with?

NEW GIRL
I wasn't *saddled* with anything. It's Coraline.

WYBIE
Caroline what?

CORALINE
Not Caroline, Coraline. Coraline Jones.

*pronounced "why-bee" **pronounced "why-born"

CONTINUED: (4)

WYBIE
(confused, not hearing it)
Hmm. Maybe you need a nickname, like I did. Of course, it's completely unscientific, but I've heard an ordinary name, like Caroline, can lead folks to have ordinary expectations about a person and an unusual name, even if it's short, will lead folks to--

Coraline's face goes stormy.

CORALINE
I think I heard someone calling for you, Wybourne.

WYBIE
What, I didn't hear any--

CORALINE
Oh, I definitely heard someone, Why-were-you-born.

Wybie realizes he's said too much. He raises his palms in surrender and gets on his scooter.

WYBIE
Ha ha, I smell what you're steppin' in.

He wheels his scooter around to go, salutes her.

WYBIE (cont'd)
Great to meet a water witch from Michigan.

She mock GROWLS at him. He twists the throttle and quietly zooms off. Coraline fumes till he's out of earshot then reaches to pet the black cat, still on the stump, squinting at her.

CORALINE
At least *you're* nice and quiet.

The black cat hops out of reach, and trots haughtily after Wybie.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Well, there's a first: a loyal kitty.

She looks down. There's a knot-hole in one of the boards that cover the well. Coraline finds some PEBBLES and drops one through the hole.

CONTINUED: (5)

She waits, ear at the knot-hole, and counts until there's a watery "plop" far below. She drops another and another and...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTATE HOUSE, JONES'S KITCHEN - DAY

SOUND OF RAIN SPILLING OVER GUTTERS. Coraline, fingers poking through old gardening gloves, is at the window, watching RAIN pour down, turning the back yard into muddy soup. Her mother, in work-at-home slacks and sweatshirt, is busy taking stacks of dishes from moving boxes and putting them on shelves.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
I'm disappointed too, dear. Main reason we picked this old place was to get our hands into some real dirt, not just write about it.

CORALINE
But Mom, it's perfect weather for gardening. You afraid we'll drown like some thirsty turkeys?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
The seedlings will drown; you – lover of sugar and all things sweet – will melt.

She knocks the bottom out of a box and folds it up.

CORALINE
But I really want to get my pumpkins and squash going, maybe have our own pumpkin patch at Halloween.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
And I want fresh herbs: a little dill, basil, some rosemary would be lovely.

She pauses to muss her daughter's hair.

CORALINE'S MOTHER (cont'd)
We've still got time. Meanwhile, I'd better crack the old laptop, your father's miles ahead of me.

Moves over to counter, and flips open her computer, hits the on button and pulls up a stool. Coraline pouts like a five-year-old.

CONTINUED:

CORALINE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
If you're desperate for something to do, you can fold moving boxes, set up your stereo, unload the -- oh, here, I found this on the porch, I think it's for you.

CORALINE
What?

Coraline walks over, pulling off her gloves, and her mother hands her a NEWSPAPER-WRAPPED FIGURE. Coraline rips off the paper to reveal an ANTIQUE DOLL. Her mother makes a curious smile, starts typing.

CLOSE ON DOLL

The doll's face and body is hand-stitched from flour sacks, dressed in gingham, stuffed with corn husks. Black button eyes stare from its friendly little, somehow familiar, face. An attached note reads:

Dear C girl,
I found this in Gran's stuff, I guess it was hers when she was a kid. Remind you of anyone? (hint -- you might have noticed them in the mirror sometime)

It strikes Coraline that yes, the doll *does* look like her; same face shape, hair color and length, even a similar sceptical expression. She continues reading.

Funny, I've seen it a bunch of times over the years and I don't remember it looking anything like you. Of course, I hadn't met you yet, so how could I know? It's really old, like a hundred years or something - practically pioneer days. If you hate it, don't throw it out; I'll take it back. Wybie

Coraline is partly charmed, partly offended. She goes with offended.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
I'm way too old for dolls.

She raises the doll and...

CUT TO:

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

...tosses it onto a chair by some moving boxes.

INT. JONES' STUDY - SAME

FRONT ANGLE ON

Coraline's father, dressed in plain khakis and a cardigan, is tapping away at his COMPUTER. Gardening magazines lie in stacks all over the desk. The door behind him opens to reveal Coraline. Concentrating on his monitor, he doesn't turn.

CORALINE'S FATHER
Hello, Coraline.

CORALINE
Hmph, it's raining.

CORALINE'S FATHER
Yep, it's bucketing down.

CORALINE
No, it's just raining. Can I go outside?

CORALINE'S FATHER
What did the boss say?

She answers in a cartoony imitation of her mother.

CORALINE
"Don't even think about going out in weather like this, Coraline Jones".

CORALINE'S FATHER
Well, there's your answer.

She sighs. Her dad, suddenly enthusiastic, grabs a pen and pad and, turning, offers them like great prizes.

REVERSE, BACK AND FORTH

CORALINE'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Time to explore the apartment! Count up the doors, count up the windows; list everything blue; mount an expedition to find the water heater!

CORALINE
Can I explore the living room, too? I love Aunt Marion's old furniture; it smells so strange.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORALINE'S FATHER
Supposed to be company only in there.

CORALINE
But we don't know anyone yet.

Coraline is determined. He relents.

CORALINE'S FATHER
Fine, don't make a mess, don't touch anything, and don't get me in trouble with your mother.

Coraline smiles a little victory smile, then takes the paper and pen and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

The living room is filled with expensive and uncomfortable FURNITURE and delicate KNICKKNACKS like a blown glass heron and Chinese vases. There is a PAINTING hanging on the wall of a bowl of fruit; there's a LOW WOODEN TABLE with carved lion's feet; an empty FIREPLACE. Coraline wanders around, peeking here and there until she gets to a BIG, CARVED WOODEN DOOR in the far corner. She crosses out the number "12" on her paper and writes "13 doors total". She tries to open the door but it's LOCKED. She hollers to the kitchen where we hear the sound of tapping computer keys:

CORALINE
Hey Mom, where does this door go?!

CORALINE'S MOTHER (o.s.)
Which door, dear?

CORALINE
The big locked one, here in the living room!

CORALINE'S MOTHER (o.s.)
The living room that's only for company?

Coraline doesn't answer.

CORALINE'S MOTHER (o.s.)
(CONT'D)
That door goes nowhere.

CORALINE
It <u>has</u> to go somewhere!

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Shaking her head, Coraline's mother gets up from her computer and takes A STRING OF KEYS from a hook over the kitchen door. She sorts through them carefully, and...

CLOSE ON KEYS

...selects an OLD, BLACK, IRON KEY.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Coraline looks on as her mother unlocks the big door with the key. The door groans open. There's an UNBROKEN BRICK WALL.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
When this place was just one house, that door went somewhere. When they turned it into apartments, they simply bricked it up.

CORALINE
But what's on the other side?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
The "other" apartment.

CORALINE
You're kidding, there's no "other" apartment. Who lives there? We've met all the neighbors.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Well it must be empty then.

She shuts the big door...

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

...and puts the string of keys back on their hook. Coraline walks in.

CORALINE
You didn't lock it.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Why should I lock it? It doesn't go anywhere.

Coraline makes an "I guess I'm just an idiot" face.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. ESTATE HOUSE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON JONES' KITCHEN WINDOW

It's nearly DARK now, and the rain still falls, spattering the glass and blurring the images of Karen, Barry, and Coraline Jones inside.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Coraline's father is serving dinner. Coraline is disgusted.

CORALINE
Dad, you've made a recipe again. Don't you know I'm starving?

CORALINE'S FATHER
I confess. Savory Portobelo mushrooms soaked in Madeira wine, grilled in oil and garlic, with a tarragon garnish, and melted Gruyere cheese.

Coraline sighs, walks to the freezer, and gets out a mini-pizza. While her dinner goes around and around in the microwave, she says:

CORALINE
They're just tricks, you know – recipes. To make bad things taste good or good things taste bad. Why don't you ever cook, Mom?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Oh, I can't compete with this. At least try some of the chard, you need a vegetable.

CORALINE'S FATHER
Sauteed with chervil and caramelized onions; think of it as an adventure for your mouth.

The micro signals and Coraline rolls her eyes, looks up to the heavens and--

MATCH ACTION TIME CUT:

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - BEDTIME

--falls back, washed and dressed for bed, on her pillow. Rain continues outside.

CONTINUED:

The DOLL Wybie gave her sits on the chair where she left it. Coraline's breathing slows and, soon, she begins to dream...

DISSOLVE TO:

DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT

Under MOONLIGHT, an abstract version of the BRICKED-UP DOORWAY starts to SPIRAL and DARKEN. Tendrils of WHITE SMOKE seep playfully out from one crack then another to form PALE SILHOUETTES of TINY KANGAROOS. Little pink eyes open and little pink mouths sing:

PALE FORMS
We are watching, we are waiting,
We are many, we are small,
We will come, so mind your footfalls,
When we lead you to the door.

Their voices are high and whispery and sweet.

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

CLOSE ON Coraline's face; she smiles in her sleep.

DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT

The tiny eyes and mouths go white and the pale creatures and dark brick patterns SWIRL together like marble cake batter.

FADE

EXT. ESTATE HOUSE - DAY

MORNING. A WHITE FOG has lowered over the house and grounds.

Coraline, in a hooded yellow coat, red scarf and boots, hops down the front steps. She's got her ragged garden GLOVES on and holds a pair of PRUNING SHEARS. MISS SPINK, INVISIBLE for the moment, greets her.

MISS SPINK (o.s.)
Hello, Caroline, lovely weather for the complexion today. Out for a walk?

CORALINE
(peering towards sound)
Hunting for roses, actually. And it's Coraline.

Miss Spink EMERGES from the fog with her THREE LEASHED DOGS.

CONTINUED:

MISS SPINK
I played Portia once. Miss Forcible talks about her Ophelia, but it was my Portia they came to see. When we trod the boards.

She's bundled up in pullovers and cardigans and looks like a large, fluffy egg. Thick glasses make her eyes look huge.

MISS SPINK (cont'd)
They used to send roses to my dressing room. They did.

CORALINE
Who did?

Miss Spink looks around, cautiously, peering into the mist as though someone might be listening.

MISS SPINK
(hissing)
Men.

She tugs the dogs to heel, and waddles off into the fog.

Coraline waves. Before she can take a step, Miss Forcible calls up from the basement apartment and stops her:

MISS FORCIBLE
Have you seen Miss Spink, Caroline?

She points to the fog in the direction Miss Spink disappeared.

CORALINE
I'm Coraline.

MISS FORCIBLE
I do hope she doesn't get lost; it'll bring on her shingles if she does, you'll see. You'd have to be an explorer to find your way around in this fog.

CORALINE
I'm an explorer.

MISS FORCIBLE
Of course you are, luvvy. Don't get lost, now.

She closes her door. Coraline turns to go but the Old Man calls down from his balcony:

CONTINUED: (2)

OLD MAN UPSTAIRS
Ahoy! Caroline!

Coraline is tired of correcting her name.

CORALINE
Oh, hello.

She can hardly see the old man through the mist. He walks slowly down his rickety outside stairway

OLD MAN UPSTAIRS
The jumping mice do not like the mist. It makes their whiskers droop.

She's too shy to mention her dream.

CORALINE
I guess I don't much like the mist, either.

The old man leans down, so close his moustache tickles Coraline's ear. He smells of strange foods.

OLD MAN UPSTAIRS
(whispering)
They have a message for you.

She covers her nose.

OLD MAN
The message is this: <u>don't go through the door</u>. Does that mean anything to you?

She quickly shakes her head.

CORALINE
No.

OLD MAN UPSTAIRS
(shrugging)
They are funny, the jumping mice. They get things wrong. They got your name wrong, you know. They kept saying <u>Cor</u>aline. Not Caroline. Not Caroline at all.

He picks up his mail from the bottom of the stairs, and starts back up to his attic apartment.

Coraline stares after him.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON COMPUTER

We see Karen's fingers typing out a chapter heading:

Hardy Perennials: Foolproof Beauty This Year, Every Year

ON SCENE

Mom's on her computer at the kitchen table. Coraline, dripping and dirty, opens the back door and wipes her feet. There's a bunch of BUG-EATEN ROSES behind her back.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Coraline, you're soaked; the fog must be awful out there.

CORALINE
Thicker than jellied brains.

She walks in and drops the roses on the table.

CORALINE (cont'd)
What do you think, Mom? You could put them in the new catalog!

Her mother wrinkles her nose at the rotten-sweet flowers.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
I sorry, dear; they've dropped the "gardens of the living-dead" chapter. Too bad.

She gestures for Coraline to remove the pile of roses. She takes them to the sink and Mom resumes typing.

CORALINE'S MOTHER (cont'd)
I heard school starts a week earlier here.

CORALINE
That's okay, I've decided to skip school this year. I'm going to Alaska for the "Riding of the Bears".

CORALINE'S MOTHER
That's nice. Do you mean the "Running of the Bulls"? In Spain?

CORALINE
No, it's Alaskan Brown Bears this year; I already ordered a silver saddle and a hunting horn.

CONTINUED: (2)

She pulls open one drawer then another, until she finds a single chocolate donut and pops it in her mouth.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
It's uniforms only, I'm afraid. At school, here. We'll need to go shopping.

CORALINE
Uniforms?

Coraline slumps at the table beside her and pretends to die.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
You still love to draw, don't you? Here.

She passes her a sheet of paper and a ballpoint pen. Coraline starts to draw a spiral.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

SAME SHOT, twenty minutes later. The sheet of paper is now completely covered with overlapping spirals. *M I S T* is written in wiggly letters at the bottom. Coraline finishes, grunts, and holds it up.

CORALINE
Well?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Hmm. Very "Edward Gorey", dear.

CLOSE ON DRAWING

The drawn spirals start to ANIMATE and become--

IMAGE MORPH TO:

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE OUT WINDOW

--SURREAL TENDRILS OF ACTUAL MIST. Lens and lighting suggest a DREAM. PAN to Coraline, lying in bed, trying to sleep. She tosses her head then rolls onto her side, trying to get comfortable.

SOMETHING goes <u>t-t-t-t-t-t</u>.

She sits up.

SOMETHING goes <u>Kreeeeeaaaaaaak.</u>

Coraline climbs out of bed and looks around: nothing.

INT. HALL - SAME

She enters the hall quietly, carefully. She pauses at a FAVORITE PICTURE on the wall, a painting of a SAD BLUE BOY whose balloon has just burst.

SOMETHING CHITTERS.

ANGLE ON GHOST-PALE LITTLE CREATURE UNDER CHAIR

The creature takes off, HOPPING down the hallway on LITTLE KANGAROO LEGS. Coraline snaps on the light as it races into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Coraline, BACKLIT in the doorway, casts the shadow of a GOOFY GIANT on the carpet. The CREATURE edges out from beneath the sofa. It pauses, then HOPS FRANTICALLY toward the farthest corner of the room.

Coraline turns on the room light.

The creature is gone, but the CARVED WOODEN DOOR is ever-so slightly OPEN. Just a crack. Coraline goes over to it, and looks in.

THE BRICK WALL IS GONE.

There is a DARK INVITING HALLWAY INSTEAD.

The smell of SOMETHING DELICIOUS reaches her nose, pleasant MUSIC reaches her ears.

CORALINE pulls the door wider. She glances once behind her, and STEPS INTO THE CORRIDOR.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Coraline MOVES FORWARD, her senses tweaked. She soon enters an area of less darkness. There's a strange familiarity now. She sees that the carpet beneath her feet is the SAME CARPET as in her own hallway. The WALLPAPER is also the SAME. She shakes her head in confusion. Why, there's the SAME PAINTING of the SAD BLUE BOY on the wall. No, not exactly the same. He's HAPPY now, and his eyes seem to glow. She stares at the picture, trying to make sense of it when she hears a familiar voice.

MOTHER'S VOICE
Coraline, is that you?

CONTINUED:

It's her mother, woken from sleep and looking for her. Coraline goes forward to the kitchen door, where the voice has come from.

INT. OTHER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Her mother turns from the stove to greet her, only IT'S NOT HER REAL MOTHER. IT'S AN IDEALIZED COPY OF HER.

Coraline is DUMBSTRUCK.

This mother's face is BEAUTIFUL with LUMINOUS, VIOLET EYES and a BRIGHT RED SMILE around GLOWING WHITE TEETH. *This* mother has LONG, BLACK, LUXURIANT HAIR; she's TALLER in TRANSLUCENT HEELED SLIPPERS and THINNER in a SATIN BATHROBE beneath a FANCY APRON. *This* mother's fingers, LONG AND EXPRESSIVE, are tipped with CRIMSON NAILS. And *this* mother is COOKING A REAL MEAL!

OTHER MOTHER
Soup's on, Coraline.

Her steady, beautiful eyes neither blink nor shift in their sockets.

CORALINE
Who are you?

She answers matter-of-factly, her speech pattern warm and old-fashioned.

OTHER MOTHER
I'm your other mother. Go tell your other father that supper's ready.

She opens the oven door and the perfume of great cooking, intoxicating at this range, fills the air. Coraline is suddenly VERY HUNGRY.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
Well, go on. He's in his study.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME

Coraline goes down the hall to what should be her father's study and opens the door.

INT. OTHER STUDY - CONTINUOUS

She sees the back of a man like her father, minus his bald spot, not tapping away at work, but PLAYING A WILD COMPUTER GAME.

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
Hello. I — I mean, she said to say that the food is ready.

He turns around. Like the Other Mother, he is a BETTER VERSION OF HER REAL FATHER. The OTHER FATHER is happy and handsome with bright, blue eyes behind STEVEN SODERBURGH GLASSES, a prominent SOUL PATCH, and an IRIDESCENT ROBE over POLKA DOT PAJAMAS. He smiles broadly and says:

OTHER FATHER
Hello Coraline, I'm starving.

Like the Other Mother, his steady eyes never blink nor shift. He stands up in ORANGE MONKEY SLIPPERS and goes with her to the kitchen.

INT. OTHER KITCHEN - SAME

They sit at the table and eat a HUGE, GOLDEN-BROWN CHICKEN, FRIED POTATOES, tiny sweet GREEN PEAS. The Other Mother looks on approvingly, not touching the food herself, while Coraline shovels it in.

CORALINE
It tastes wonderful.

OTHER MOTHER
Home-grown vegetables, thanks to your other father.

OTHER FATHER
(smiles)
I just do what I'm told.

Coraline's other parents squeeze each other's hands affectionately.

OTHER MOTHER
We've been waiting for you for a long time.

CORALINE
For me?

OTHER MOTHER
Yes. It wasn't the same here without you. But we knew you'd arrive one day, and then we could be a proper family. A proper family with proper meals. Would you like some more chicken?

Coraline nods and is served.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
(cautiously)
I didn't know I had another mother.

OTHER MOTHER
Of course you do. Everyone does.

She smiles at Coraline, her eyes gleaming.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
After our snack, I thought we might play some games together before bedtime. We've got "Great Explorers", "Happy Families", "Mythology Monopoly"...

OTHER FATHER
...board games, card games, guessing games — whichever you choose.

Coraline, overwhelmed, suddenly feels exhausted.

CORALINE
I, I'd love to play some time, but I really need to go home and...
(big yawn)
... get to sleep.

OTHER MOTHER
Of course,sweetheart, your bed's all made up with fresh sheets and a nice comforter.

CORALINE
But what I meant was--

OTHER FATHER
Hush now.

OTHER MOTHER
And come along.

They take her hand and lead her from the table, the Other Mother's heels CLICKING on the floor. Coraline is so tired she doesn't resist.

INT. CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM - SAME

The light is switched on and Coraline is delighted at what she sees. Her other bedroom is green and pink and filled with remarkable things: wind-up angels that FLUTTER AROUND LIKE SPARROWS; books with pictures that MOVE AND SHIMMER; little dinosaur skulls that CHATTER THEIR TEETH as she passes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She climbs into her oh-so-inviting bed with its black and white checkered quilt. All the little things in the room settle down to rest. The Other Parents stand there smiling at her as she drifts off to sleep.

OTHER MOTHER
Sweet dreams, daughter.

OTHER FATHER
Sweet dreams, Coraline.

TOGETHER
See you soon ...

FADE OUT.

INT. CORALINE'S REAL BEDROOM - DAY

MISTY MORNING. Coraline awakens with a stretch and a yawn, looking around expecting some bright color, a wind-up angel, anything from the other world. But it's just her NORMAL ROOM again, nothing's changed. She notices the BUTTON-EYED DOLL that's beside her pillow. Wasn't it on the chair when she went to sleep?

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Coraline creeps into the living room and goes to the big door, still ajar. She peeks behind and finds the WALL OF SOLID BRICKS. Yes, it had to be a dream. She shakes her head and pushes the big door shut.

KITCHEN - DAY

Breakfast. Mom and Dad finish up their bowls of "Go Lean Breakfast Twigs" and sliced kumquats and mugs of coffee. They're half-reading the morning paper, half-listening as Coraline recounts her dream, her breakfast untouched.

CORALINE
It was incredibly real, Mom, you had the most amazing clothes and hair and eyes, only you weren't really you, you were--

CORALINE'S MOTHER
(disapproving)
Not hungry at all? But Coraline, you only *dreamed* you ate all that old-fashioned food. At least take your multi-vitamin.

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
You were in the dream too, Dad, you had wild-looking pajamas and orange monkey slippers.

He pretends to be offended.

CORALINE'S FATHER
My monkey slippers are blue.

He gets up and scrapes his breakfast remains in a trash can. Speaking in a radio news reader's voice, he announces:

CORALINE'S FATHER (CONT'D)
And in other news this morning: top officials at world-famous Northwest Garden Supply continue to ask: has Mrs. Jones settled on a title for her final chapter?

Karen closes her eyes and touches fingers to forehead.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
It came to me in a dream: "Gardens From Garbage: Let's Compost". And if Mr. Jones expects me to edit his pages; he'd better wrap it up posthaste.

CORALINE'S FATHER
Message received, mon commandant!

He salutes then, wiggling his fingers overhead like a piano player, heads to his study. Karen smiles, gets up to clear the rest of the dishes with Coraline.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
The downstairs ladies have been asking for you, dear, why don't you go visit while I work? They might enjoy your colorful stories.

Coraline nods okay, fine, if her own parents don't want to hear about her dreams...

EXT. MISSES SPINK & FORCIBLE'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Coraline rings the buzzer at the beveled glass door. The mist, more of a thick ground fog now, falls down the stone stairs behind her. There's a frenzied woofing inside then the SCOTTIES appear, jumping with excitement. Miss Spink opens the door.

CONTINUED:

MISS SPINK
Angus, Hamish, Jock, down now, luvvys — it's only Caroline. Come in, dear. Would you like a cup of tea?

The apartment smells of furniture polish and dogs.

CORALINE
Yes, please.

INT. MISSES SPINK & FORCIBLE'S FLAT - SAME

Miss Spink leads her into a dusty LITTLE PARLOR. On the walls are black and white GLOSSIES of the two actresses when they were young and pretty, and framed theater programs. Miss Forcible, knitting away in one of the armchairs, smiles hello.

Miss Spink pours Coraline a cup of tea in a little pink bone china cup and saucer. Stale biscuits are offered.

MISS FORCIBLE
Anyway, April, you have to admit: there's life in the old dog yet.

MISS SPINK
Miriam, dear, neither of us is as young as we were.

MISS FORCIBLE
Madame Arcati. The nurse in Romeo. Lady Bracknell. Character parts. They can't retire you from the stage.

MISS SPINK
Now, Miriam, we agreed. If they want us, they know where to find us. It's a small town.

Coraline wonders if they've forgotten she's there. She takes a LOUD SIP from her teacup. Miss Spink looks at her.

MISS SPINK (cont'd)
I'll read the leaves, if you want.

CORALINE
What?

MISS SPINK
The tea leaves, dear. I'll read your future.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Coraline passes her cup. Miss Spink peers short-sightedly at the black tea-leaves in the bottom. She purses her lips.

MISS SPINK (cont'd)
You know, Caroline, you are in terrible danger.

Miss Forcible snorts, and puts down her knitting.

MISS FORCIBLE
Don't be silly, April, your eyes are going. Pass me that cup, child.

Coraline carries the cup over to Miss Forcible. She looks into it carefully, shakes her head, and looks again.

MISS FORCIBLE (cont'd)
Oh dear. You were right, April. She <u>is</u> in danger.

MISS SPINK
(triumphantly)
See, Miriam. My eyes are as good as they ever were.

Coraline is very interested, a little excited even.

CORALINE
What am I in danger from?

Misses Spink and Forcible stare at her blankly.

MISS SPINK
It didn't say. Tea leaves aren't reliable for that kind of thing. Not really. They're good for general, but not for specifics.

CORALINE
Well what should I do?

MISS SPINK
Don't wear green in your dressing room.

MISS FORCIBLE
Or mention the "Scottish" play.

Coraline nods okay, though their advice makes no sense at all.

MISS SPINK
And be very, very careful. Now, was there something you came to tell us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Coraline thinks it over, then shakes her head.

CORALINE
No, I guess not.

She stands to leave.

EXT. MISSES SPINK & FORCIBLE'S FLAT - SAME

Coraline, hat and coat on, climbs the stone stairs to ground level and looks out. The mist hangs like blindness, the front yard a ghost-world. She thinks out loud:

CORALINE
(excited)
In danger?

She turns to go up to her apartment and is surprised to see Wybie coming up the driveway on his electric scooter. He's rolling very slowly, neck bent, searching for something on the ground. Got a CAMERA around his neck and a TOOL BELT under his too-big fireman's coat.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
What's up, Why-were-you-born? Lost your cat?

He looks up.

WYBIE
(speed-talking as usual)
Oh, uh, hi; hi C girl.

Her face sours but she lets the nickname slide.

WYBIE (cont'd)
He's not lost; just disappears when it's all damp like this -- hates it. Of course, even a house cat will swim if you throw them in a pool. Won't bring you little dead things again, though.

CORALINE
So you admit you've thrown your own kitty into--

WYBIE
Slippery, yellowy banana slugs, now they just love weather like this. It's like spontaneous generation, you know, maggots from meat, eels from mud? I'm looking for a monster.

CONTINUED:

He leans his scooter on the side of the front steps and takes some WOODEN TONGS from his tool belt.

CORALINE
Why are you looking for king-sized slugs ... in my yard?

Wybie ignores the "my" and starts poking under some nearby laurel bushes.

WYBIE
Winning picture's worth fifty bucks and the front page in the *Post-Intelligencer*; that's if there's no layoffs up at Boeing or a new timber infestation that day.

CORALINE
(casual)
What do you know about rodents that jump?

WYBIE
(inhales)
Well, one kind are called kangaroo mice. Live in the desert, go airborne when a sidewinder strikes.

He hops his hand along then uses the tongs to strike at it like a snake.

WYBIE (cont'd)
The other kind play instruments in a circus and, uh, live in the head of the Crazy Old Man Upstairs. I'd like to believe they're real, of course. I mean, can you imagine? Little jumpy rodents that can play instruments?

CORALINE
I saw one.

He glances over, skeptical.

CORALINE (cont'd)
It was a dream, I guess. But it seemed perfectly real, and I followed it to the other apartment. Did you know, everyone has another--

WYBIE
(excited)
Stop the fantasies, girl, and check out this prize-winning dose of reality.

CONTINUED: (2)

Wybie stands up and presents a fat six-inch yellow-green slug to Coraline, gently held at tong's end. Mad about being interrupted, she ignores it.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Half a foot of good jam, hunh?

CORALINE
You're just like them.

WYBIE
I'm like a slug?

CORALINE
Maybe, but I meant my parents; they don't want to listen to me either.

He shakes his head and hands her his camera. She acts put-out, but frames the shot and SNAPS a picture with auto-flash.

WYBIE
Let's not risk it to one shot, here, I'll get my head in to prove how big it is — the slug, of course. Ready, and ...

She fires off one shot after another as he strikes silly poses: horrified of the slug one moment; ready to eat it the next; pretending it's something from his nose in another. She can't help but giggle. They finish.

CORALINE
You know, that old doll you left me is pretty "good jam". Spooky how it looks like me.

He nods, then gently places the slug beneath a bush. She hands him the camera and he pauses to look around.

WYBIE
(wistful)
I've been finding cool things, building forts, climbing trees around here since I could crawl. Of course, it hasn't been ours since forever but it still feels like home. That's spooky.

CORALINE
(thinks land)
You want it back?

CONTINUED: (3)

WYBIE
(thinks doll)
No, no, keep the doll; makes sense:
Gran's old doll; Gran's old house.

He climbs on his scooter, adjusts things.

CORALINE
Wait a minute, I'm not talking about--

WYBIE
Enjoy it all while you can. Main floor renter's never stay long.

He pulls away.

CORALINE
(calling)
Would you stop interrupting me for--!

WYBIE
Bye, C Girl.

And he's gone. Push in on Coraline's very frustrated face, watching him go.

MATCH COMPOSITION TIME CUT:

INT CORALINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

C.U. ON DOLL FACE, button eyes exactly where Coraline's were in last shot. It looks even more like her than before. Coraline, off camera, moves the doll from frame, revealing a nighttime window.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Coraline places the doll beside her pillow, studying it a moment, thinking of Wybie. She blinks slowly.

Focusing on the here and now, she pulls some CHEDDAR CHEESE from her nightshirt pocket and puts it by the door. Bait for the dream mouse. She's determined to know what's real and what isn't.

She lies down...

TIME CUT TO:

INT CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Lensing and lighting suggest another DREAM SCENE. Coraline tosses fitfully, not quite sleeping. As before:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOME *THINGS* go t-t-t-t-t-t.

She sits up.

SOME *THINGS* go Kreeeeeaaaaaaak.

Coraline looks to her door. The cheese is GONE.

INT. HALL - SAME

She enters the hall and spots *THREE* GHOSTLY KANGAROO MICE hopping down the hallway, lugging the cheese. She gives quiet chase.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Coraline enters to see the kangaroo mice go directly to the CARVED WOODEN DOOR, open a crack as before, and disappear.

She opens the door all the way.

Once again, the BRICKS ARE GONE; the mystery HALLWAY REVEALED. She sniffs the fragrant smell of ANOTHER DELICIOUS MEAL and STEPS into the new corridor.

CUT TO:

INT. OTHER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Coraline enters the Other Kitchen. The Other Mother is even MORE DAZZLING tonight. Her long black hair is tied in a DIZZY FRENCH BRAID; her brilliant robe is PATTERNED LIKE A TIGER SALAMANDER. She's TALLER in HIGH-HEELED COWBOY BOOTS, her SMILE IS WHITER, LIPS REDDER. She turns to Coraline with bright violet eyes.

OTHER MOTHER
Welcome back, darling. I thought you'd like a *real* breakfast tonight. No reason we can't enjoy your favorite foods any time of day.

Coraline's mouth waters at the sight of loganberry pancakes, bacon, sausage and huge milkshakes. The Other Mother crumbles cheese into a sizzling fry pan of scrambled eggs.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
You're such a thoughtful daughter, Coraline, sending this nice cheddar ahead.

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
Cheddar?
(remembers mice)
Oh, the cheese...

OTHER MOTHER
Time to get your father — I bet he's worked up quite an appetite.

CORALINE
You mean the Other Father?

OTHER MOTHER
If you prefer. Go on then.

She heads to the study.

INT OTHER FATHER'S STUDY - SAME

She enters the study but the Other Father isn't there. She hears some outside sounds and goes to the window.

EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME

Under the light of a full moon and a miner's lamp, the Other Father is HARD AT WORK IN A FANTASTIC GARDEN. He's got all the tools her real parents never used: rakes and hoes and tillers and a wheelbarrow; a mattock, clippers, post-hole diggers, weeders, pruners. And the fruited and flowering plants are AMAZING, FANTASTIC VERSIONS of all her favorites: GIANT PUMPKINS and WARPED SQUASH; HUGE SNAPDRAGONS that REALLY SNAP; BLEEDING HEARTS that BEAT and LEAK crimson nectar which LUMINESCENT HUMMINGBIRDS slurp up greedily. Coraline pushes up the window and gushes:

CORALINE
Your garden is beautiful!

The Other Father turns, wipes his brow and beams.

OTHER FATHER
Our garden, Coraline. Your mother said you'd like it; she knows you like she knows her own reflection. She was *certain* you'd be back tonight, and here you are!

Coraline nods wonderingly.

CORALINE
I guess I am... Well, she says it's time to eat.

INT OTHER KITCHEN - SAME

Coraline's even hungrier than her hard-working Other Father, eating like she's never had a decent meal in her life. The Other Mother feeds bits of sausage to some freshly-cut snapdragons in a vase.

OTHER MOTHER
After tonight's meal, I thought you might want to go upstairs and see the Mouse Circus.

CORALINE
Wow. That know-it-all Wybie said it was all in the Old Man's head; I knew he was wrong.

OTHER FATHER
Things are right in this world, Coraline. Your mother made it so.

Coraline hurries to finish the meal, while her Other Parents smile at one another.

OTHER MOTHER
Your father and I will clean up while you two go upstairs to see the Old Man and his "jumpers".

She goes to the kitchen door that leads outside.

CORALINE
You two?

There's a KNOCK at the door. The Other Mother opens it to reveal The OTHER WYBIE. He's cleaner, less eccentric-looking than original Wybie, with normal posture, a straight neck, a friendly grin. Coraline stands, uncomfortable.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Another Wybie. Hello.

The boy nods and smiles, his bright eyes shining like the Other Parent's, fixed in their sockets, never blinking.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Why doesn't he say something?

OTHER FATHER
Cat's got his tongue.

CORALINE
What?

CONTINUED:

OTHER MOTHER
You wanted to like this boy in your world but his busy tongue was in the way. I fixed that here.

CORALINE
So he can't talk? Not at all?

She's certainly intrigued with the concept.

OTHER MOTHER
Another gift for you, my darling girl. Now you two run along. We'll have your bed all ready for you, Coraline, when you are finished upstairs.

Coraline nods then heads out the door with the mute boy.

EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME

ANGLE ON FRONT

The Other House, lit by amber spotlights and outlined by tiny Christmas lights, is more stylized with exaggerated gingerbread and new topiary growing in the yard. Pathways and steps sparkle under golden mushroom lights and all the stair rails are sculpted neon. Coraline and the Other Wybie enter frame.

CORALINE
You're awfully cheerful, considering you can't say anything.

The Other Wybie nods vigorously. They climb the stairs.

CORALINE (cont'd)
It didn't hurt, did it, losing your tongue I mean.

They reach the top. Other Wybie shakes his head no, not *quite* as vigorously.

Before Coraline can knock, a small HIDDEN DOOR within the larger door opens with a brassy trumpet fanfare.

INT. OTHER OLD MAN'S FLAT - SAME

On hands and knees they enter to find themselves within a 1/10 SCALE, STRIPED CIRCUS TENT. They pass a MINIATURE REFRESHMENT STAND where Coraline plucks up TINY COTTON CANDY FLUFFS and BAGS OF POPCORN and STRAWS FILLED WITH COLORED SUGAR. Ringside, there's a spot between empty miniature bleachers, just wide enough for the two of them to sit.

CONTINUED:

The house lights dim. A lone spotlight hits the far side of the circus ring. A shrieking steam calliope kicks in and a TINY CLOWN CAR roars into the ring. Skidding wildly this way and that, it spins out of control then comes to an abrupt stop at the center. The doors pop open, and one after the other, out hop TWENTY-FIVE UNIFORMED KANGAROO MICE.

Coraline is UTTERLY DELIGHTED.

The line of hoppers CREATE A SPIRAL, round and round, tighter and tighter, that suddenly pushes up to form a PYRAMID OF MICE. The LEADER, the largest and most ornately uniformed of the bunch, appears on top and pulls a BATON from thin air. He raises it up, and TINY INSTRUMENTS APPEAR in the paws of all below him. He slashes down and they launch into a THUNDEROUS RUSSIAN CIRCUS MARCH.

Coraline, covering her ears and grinning, turns to the Other Wybie:

CORALINE
It's wonderful, Wybie, I love it!

He smiles, nodding to the beat of the LITTLE BASS DRUM. When the march ends, Coraline breaks into APPLAUSE.

A WHIP CRACKS over their heads and they jerk around to see the OTHER OLD MAN in the doorway, whip in hand. He's dressed in a RINGMASTER'S OUTFIT with a TALL BLACK HAT and FULL LENGTH CAPE, his MOUSTACHE is grand and waxed.

OTHER OLD MAN
(thick Eastern European accent)
There you have it, Ladies and Gentlemen;
the Stupendous, Magnificent,
Internationally Acclaimed Jumping Mouse
Circus!

He DOFFS his hat and bows. The mouse pyramid COLLAPSES and the mice hop quickly past Coraline and Other Wybie.

They SCAMPER up the Old Man's PANT-LEGS, burrowing INTO POCKETS, UNDER HIS CAPE, down his COLLAR. The BAND LEADER MOUSE hops onto his SHOULDER, swings up on his MOUSTACHE and onto the old man's HEAD. The Old Man replaces his hat.

OTHER OLD MAN (CONT'D)
We're very pleased you're here, Miss
Coraline. Did you like the mice?

This Old Man says her name right!

CONTINUED: (2)

CORALINE
They're great, I loved the mice!

OTHER OLD MAN
Wonderful, wonderful — you are welcome anytime you like. You and your good friend there.

Other Wybie beams.

OTHER OLD MAN (cont'd)
You know, it is time for the jumpers to have their dinner. If you like, you can stay and watch them feed.

She covers a HUGE YAWN, suddenly exhausted.

CORALINE
No thank-you. But I'm sure I'll be back.

She pulls Other Wybie to his feet.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Walk me down the stairs? I'm ready to fall over.

She hears the mice WHISPER under the Other Old Man's clothes as they walk past him, nodding good-bye, and out the door. He watches them leave, his bright eyes FIXED IN PLACE like the Others.

INT. CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM - SAME

The Other Mother tucks Coraline in while Other Wybie and the Other Father stand at her side. She leans over Coraline:

OTHER MOTHER
Good night, sweet Coraline. We'll all be together again soon, I just know it. One big happy family.

The OTHER PARENTS smile oh-so-warmly and open and close their hands good-bye. Other Wybie smiles and nods. Her heavy lids close.

Shadows of kangaroo mice slide mysteriously onto the canopy over the bed. Ink black and hugely distorted, the shadows start to sing.

SHADOWS
We are small but we are many,
We are many we are small,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHADOWS (cont'd)
We were here before you rose,
We will be here <u>when</u> <u>you</u> <u>fall</u>.

Their voices are WHINEY and not so HIGH.

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

EARLY MORNING. Coraline awakens, clutching the button-eyed doll. She races to her window to see the garden. Nothing but bug-eaten roses and weeds under a grey sky. *How could a dream be so real?*

She checks by her door. The cheese is REALLY and TRULY GONE. This is <u>much</u> too confusing. She slaps her cheeks to clear the cobwebs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Coraline goes to the big door in the corner. It's closed and, when she tries the handle, locked as well. What the hell? The kitchen tea kettle starts to WHISTLE. She creeps back to her bedroom and the whistle becomes the--.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

--SQUEAL of brakes, as the Jones' JEEP pulls up in front of "Northwest Garden" headquarters. Coraline is sharing her latest dream:

CORALINE (V.O.)
... squash like balloon animals; wiggly peppers and cartoon pumpkins and snapping snap dragons

CLOSER ON FAMILY

Coraline continues from back seat as her father climbs out front passenger side with a LAPTOP CASE and a small PROJECTOR:

CORALINE (cont'd)
And upstairs I saw a *real* mouse circus, not a pretend one like the crazy old man's in our house.

Her mother comments from the driver's seat.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
He's just eccentric, dear.

Dad leans down to Mom, changes subject.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORALINE'S FATHER
So, what do you think?
(indicates briefcase)
Tough job, with the move and all.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Don't worry, Barry, they'll love the new catalog. At least they'll love *my* chapters.

Gives her an "oh, aren't you funny" look and a kiss good-bye. Steps to Coraline's window and smiles with slight concern.

CORALINE'S FATHER
As for you, my dizzy petunia, those dreams smell like a best seller. How about: *The Joy of Cooking in the Twilight Zone?* Ha!

Coraline blocks his big wet kiss on her cheek with her hand and a ...

CORALINE
Please, Dad.

...so he waves in her face, and heads off.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - SAME

SCHOOL UNIFORMS AISLE. Coraline's mother piles gray blouses, a navy skirt, and boring white socks onto the arms of a patient, female CLERK who's cute and butch. Coraline presents a pair of BRILLIANT GREEN GLOVES she's found.

CORALINE
But Mom, the whole school's going to wear boring gray blouses and everything. No one will have green gloves; I could be the only one.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Let's stick with the official dress code for now, dear. We can get them next time.

Coraline mutters:

CORALINE
My *other* mother would get them now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

... and leaves to return the gloves. Karen ignores her, holds up a baggy pullover sweater to the store clerk.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
She's up a full size just out of the blue. What do you think, just a tiny bit huge?

The clerk indicates "just a tiny bit" with her thumb and forefinger, then takes the tone of a coconspirator.

STORE CLERK
If you don't mind my asking, do you get a lot of that "other mother" stuff?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Beg your pardon?

STORE CLERK
You see, me and *my* girlfriend are planning to have a baby and we could really use some advice on ...

Coraline's mother sighs.

A DIFFERENT AISLE.

Coraline places the gloves back where she found them. She sees a collection of little kids' RAIN BOOTS shaped like frogs and ducks and rabbits. There's a single one shaped like a cat, a BLACK CAT. She holds it up to stare at it's little painted cat face then, two aisles over, spots Wybie — the real one — following a wide-beamed hippie lady with a long single braid of hair. As usual, he's going on and on about something; the woman — his MOTHER thinks Coraline — just nods. She drops down, not wanting to be seen, and waits until they move away.

BACK ON UNIFORM AISLE

Coraline comes up behind her mother and pokes her.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Oh, there you are. Where did you disappear to?

CORALINE
Abducted by Aliens. They came down from outer space with ray guns, but I fooled them with a wig from aisle six and laughed in a foreign accent, and I escaped.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Her mother shoots a "I told you she has a big imagination" look at the clerk.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Congratulations. Now, what do you say we get some hair clips?

CORALINE
No thanks.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
(to clerk)
Well, let's say half a dozen, to be on the safe side.

INT. CAR - SAME

Coraline and her mother are driving home, packages in the back seat.

CORALINE
So what do *you* think's in the other apartment.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
I don't know. It probably looks like our apartment before we moved in. Empty rooms. Certainly not a family of Jones imposters.

CORALINE
Then why did you lock the big door?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
I found some mice poop and ... well, you're getting a little obsessed with these dreams of yours. I thought you'd feel safer.

CORALINE
But they're not scary, they're the best adventures I've had since we moved here.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
School can be an adventure, if you think of it that way.

CORALINE
Right, nothing beats sitting on your hiney all day.

They pull into their DRIVEWAY.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

ANGLE FROM INSIDE FRIDGE OUT

Door opens and Coraline's mother peers in, rummaging through near-empty shelves. The clock on the wall behind shows it's almost noon.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Damn, nothing for lunch.

ANGLE ON SCENE

She shuts the fridge.

CORALINE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Well, I had to go food shopping anyway -- your father's planning something special with scallops and truffle oil.

Coraline squinches up her nose.

CORALINE
Yuck, fungus-flavored sea biscuits.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Scallops are shellfish, dear. Want to come?

CORALINE
Nope.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Suit yourself. And put your new stuff away, please.

She starts to leave then comes back for her purse and car-keys and leaves again.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

SHORT WHILE LATER. Coraline, bored, flips through a coffee table book called "World Arts and Crafts". She stops on a chapter called "Ghost Palaces", intrigued.

We see pictures of miniature HOMES FOR THE DEAD and their details: tile floors; TV satellites; miniature Mercedes-Benzes in the garages; and even miniature maids, cooks, and security guards. All made out of paper, glue, paint and wood sticks.

Her imagination takes over, and we see the little figures come to life, to walk and gesture;

CONTINUED:

a bustling little paper household. A picture of the DECEASED is carried inside the little house and then the whole shebang is TORCHED. Buddhist tradition.

BACK TO REALITY

Coraline slams the book shut and glances at the clock: it's an hour later now. She listens for her mother's car. Nothing.

Coraline gets a STEP-STOOL from the broom closet, walks over to the kitchen door and reaches up out of frame.

Something drops past camera and hits the floor with a CHINK.

She picks up the STRING OF KEYS and smiles triumphantly.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Coraline stands in front of the big, carved door and picks out the black iron key. She pushes it into the keyhole. It turns smoothly with a satisfying clunk.

Coraline stops and listens once more for her mother, *no good getting caught now*. Nothing again.

She puts her hand on the door-knob, and, CLOSING HER EYES, Coraline OPENS THE DOOR.

ON CORALINE

Her hair lifts in a gentle breeze and her nostrils fill with a delicious smell and she knows before her eyes open that the BRICKS ARE GONE, SAME AS AT NIGHT IN HER DREAMS THAT ARE NOT DREAMS.

ON SCENE

She smiles and walks through the door and into the passage.

CORALINE
This is more like it.

CUT TO:

INT. OTHER KITCHEN - DAY

All of her favorite lunch foods are ready and waiting for her: FOOT-LONG HOTDOGS on fresh buns with five varieties of mustard relish; GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICHES with sliced gherkins on crust-cut white bread; FRENCH-FRIES shaped like LIGHTENING BOLTS; a MACARONI CASSEROLE; and piles of COLESLAW.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Soda pop in FIVE BRILLIANT COLORS fills five bottles. EIGHT FLAVORS of ice tea. Pinned to the biggest hotdog is a NOTE which reads:

Dearest Coraline,
Your father and I are taking a little nap right now, so go ahead and help yourself. You might want to visit Miss Spink and Miss Forcible when you've finished; I understand they've got a surprise for you.
Love,
Mother

Sounds good to her. Coraline digs in with abandon.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME

AFTER LUNCH. She enters the hallway, comfortably full, wiping her mouth, and goes to her Other Parents' BEDROOM DOOR. She listens for snores and mutters but there is only SILENCE. Oh well. She looks down the hall. Instead of a darkening passageway back home, she sees the OTHER FRONT DOOR, SUNLIGHT streaming through it's glass panes.

EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME

Coraline steps onto the FRONT PORCH. The OTHER DAY is sunny and warm with BLUE SKIES and MUCH GREENER trees and PURPLE HILLS.

She walks past the Other Old Man's "up" stairs to the Other Old Ladies "down" stairs. Blue and red chaser lights flash on and off around their door spelling out "A THEATRICAL TRIUMPH!!!"

SOMEONE clears their voice from behind. She turns around and sees the BLACK CAT standing on a wall. He's IDENTICAL to the one back home.

CAT
Good afternoon.

Her brows raise. She studies the animal a moment.

CORALINE
Wybie's got a cat just like you at home. Not the quiet Wybie, the one that talks too much. You must be the Other Cat.

The cat shakes its head.

CAT
No. I'm not the other anything. I'm me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It tips its head on one side, green eyes glinting.

CAT (cont'd)
You people are spread all over the place. Cats, on the other hand, keep ourselves together. If you see what I mean.

CORALINE
I guess. But if you're the same cat, how can you talk?

The cat shrugs in a smooth movement from the tip of its tail to its whiskers.

CAT
I can talk.

CORALINE
Cat's don't talk at home.

CAT
No?

CORALINE
No.

The cat leaps smoothly from the wall to the grass near Coraline's feet. It stares up at her.

CAT
(drily)
Well, you're the expert on these things. After all, what would I know? I'm only a cat.

It begins to walk away, head and tail held high and proud.

CORALINE
Come back. Please. I'm sorry, I really am.

The cat stops walking, sits, and starts to wash itself.

Coraline forces herself to be polite.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Please, what exactly is this place?

CAT
(glancing)
It's here.

CONTINUED: (2)

CORALINE
I can see that. Well, how did *you* get here?

CAT
Like you did. I walked. Like this.

The cat walks across the lawn and behind a tree. Coraline goes over and looks behind the tree. He's gone.

She walks back toward the house. There's another throat-clearing behind her. It's the cat again.

CAT (cont'd)
By the by, you *might* think this place is a dream come true. But you'd probably be mistaken. The Other Wybie told me.

CORALINE
But he can't talk.

CAT
Please, give us cats a little credit. After all, the most average of *my* species can hear, see, and smell several orders of magnitude better than any human.

The cat drops into a sudden crouch, then abruptly turns tail and dashes for the woods.

Coraline screws up her face, shrugs, then turns and walks down to Miss Spink and Forcible's door. Even in daylight, the chaser lights flash brilliantly.

She knocks once and the door swings open.

INT. MISS SPINK AND FORCIBLE'S OTHER APARTMENT - SAME

She pushes past elegant VELVET CURTAINS to discover an enormous, darkened THEATER with dim rows of seats and a high wooden stage.

A FLASHLIGHT comes towards her, swinging left and right, carried in the mouth of a large black SCOTTIE DOG. He drops the flashlight and looks up, sniffs, then SPEAKS to her with a Scots accent.

USHER DOG
(gruff)
Right. Let's see your ticket.

CORALINE
Ticket?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

USHER DOG
That's what I said. Ticket. I haven't got all day, you know. You can't watch the show without a ticket.

CORALINE
(shrugging)
I don't have a ticket.

USHER DOG
(gloomy)
Another one. Come in here, bold as anything, "Where's your ticket?" "Haven't got one", I don't know ...

It shakes its head and shrugs.

USHER DOG (cont'd)
Come on, then.

He picks up the flashlight and leads Coraline down front to an empty seat between a TINY DOG and the Other Wybie. She's happy to seem him and squeezes his arm hello. He beams back at her with real warmth. As her eyes adjust, she sees that the ENTIRE AUDIENCE is made up of SCOTTY DOGS.

A scratchy vaudeville RECORD starts and the curtains open on a SEASIDE SETTING from the 1920's complete with BOARDWALK, CUT-OUT WAVES and CARDBOARD CRYING SEAGULLS that flap through the air. Then old Miss Spink, riding a UNICYCLE, and old Miss Forcible, skipping behind tossing flower petals, appear. When they reach the front of the stage, Miss Spink LEAPS off the unicycle, and they bow.

All the dogs THUMP their tails and bark enthusiastically. Coraline, frightened for the ladies' safety, politely claps and glances to Other Wybie. Clapping hard, he motions her to pay attention.

When the heavy old troupers unbutton their coats, FAT SUIT BODIES and MASKS split open to reveal much different ladies inside. The OTHER MISS SPINK and FORCIBLE are YOUNG, THIN, PRETTY and PALE in TIGHT BATHING SUITS striped like SALTWATER TAFFY. Coraline laughs with relief and amazement.

They ladies SLAP their thighs. The dogs WOOF.

YOUNG SPINK
And now, Miriam and I proudly present a new, and exciting addendum to our theatrical exposition. Do I see a volunteer?

CONTINUED: (2)

Wybie gives Coraline a nudge and the little dog on her other side advises:

LITTLE DOG
That's you.

Coraline stands up, and walks up the steps to the stage.

YOUNG SPINK
Now Coraline, we don't know each other, do we?

Coraline, happy to go along, shakes her head no.

YOUNG SPINK (CONT'D)
Goo. Now, please stand over here.

She leads Coraline over to a lifeguard stand by the side of the stage and places a balloon on top of her head.

Young Miss Forcible picks a KNIFE from a box on the other side of the stage.

YOUNG FORCIBLE
(brandishing to audience)
Now is this a dagger that I see before me?

ALL THE DOGS
(shout)
Yes! It is!

She curtseys and all the dogs thump and bark again. Other Wybie seems a touch concerned. Coraline gulps.

Young Spink BLINDFOLDS Young Forcible with a black scarf, then turns her around three times till she points at Coraline. Coraline holds her breath and fists tightly.

Young Miss Forcible draws back the knife then FLINGS it at Coraline.

CUT TO:

SLOW MOTION OVER KNIFE SHOT as it turns end over end, closer and closer, seemingly right towards Coraline's face.

QUICK CUTAWAY to Other Wybie; his hands cover his eyes.

Coraline squeezes her eyes shut, and, at the last moment, the knife CLEARS HER HEAD, POPS THE BALLOON and STICKS INTO THE STAND with a TWANG.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Coraline exhales a lung full and the dogs GO WILD. Other Wybie, sweat on his brow, manages a shrill, two-pinky whistle.

Young Miss Spink, eyes bright and fixed and never blinking, THANKS Coraline with a large box of SALTWATER TAFFY.

Coraline walks off the stage, a look of ENORMOUS RELIEF on her face.

EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - DAY

SUNSET. Other Wybie escorts Coraline up the stone stairs from Misses Spink and Forcible's other apartment. The Other Parents, silhouetted by the sinking sun, wait for them out front, smiling side by side.

OTHER MOTHER
Did you have a nice time?

The Other Mother's hair moves in a gentle breeze. Coraline shades her eyes.

CORALINE
Just amazing, really. The dogs ... young Miss Spink and Miss Forcible. The knife part was way scary, but of course I knew they would miss.

Other Wybie winces ever so slightly, remembering. As the Other Parents begin to walk back to the other house with Coraline, he remains in place.

OTHER MOTHER
You like it here, don't you, Coraline?

CORALINE
(nods)
Well, it's way more interesting than at home.

They step inside, Coraline last. She glances back to Other Wybie, and waves, then follows. Wybie's smile melts into a look of sadness. He lowers his head, almost ashamed.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

OTHER MOTHER
I'm glad you like it. Because we'd like to think that *this* is your home. You can stay here forever and always; if you want to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
Really?

OTHER FATHER
If you want to stay, there's only one little thing we'll have to do, so you can stay here forever and always.

They go into the kitchen and...

INT. OTHER KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

...sit at the table.

OTHER MOTHER
(gestures)
This world was made by my hand for you, Coraline, as a *loving* mother would hand-sew her daughter's playthings.

They lean in, their gaze locked on Coraline. It dawns on her that their never-blinking, never moving eyes are *not eyes at all* – they are *perfect tattoos of eyes* on *closed lids*. The lids open to reveal their true eyes: SEWN-ON BLACK BUTTONS. Coraline GASPS, this world suddenly OFF-BALANCE.

CORALINE
What have you ... done to yourselves?

The Other Mother opens an outstretched hand. It holds a SPOOL OF BLACK THREAD, and a LONG SILVER NEEDLE, and TWO BLACK BUTTONS. FOR CORALINE.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
NO WAY!

She pulls back, hands over eyes, PANIC rising.

OTHER MOTHER
Oh, but we want you to. We want you to stay. And it's just a little thing.

OTHER FATHER
It won't hurt.

Coraline SQUINTS between her HARD-PRESSED FINGERS.

CORALINE
THAT'S WHAT THE DOCTOR ALWAYS SAYS!

Her Other Mother smiles brightly, her long white fingers drifting like seaweed.

CONTINUED:

OTHER MOTHER
We only want what's best for you.

She puts her CHILLY hand on Coraline's shoulder. Coraline PUSHES it away and STANDS UP.

CORALINE
I'm going to bed! RIGHT NOW!

OTHER MOTHER
(wounded)
Bed?

OTHER FATHER
Before supper?

Coraline fights to control her quaking voice.

CORALINE
I'm *really, really* tired.
(fakes huge yawn)
Think I ... I just need to sleep on things.

The Other Mother stands, masks disappointment behind her button eyes.

OTHER MOTHER
Of course you do, darling. We'll be happy to tuck you in.

CORALINE
(palm up,forced smile)
No thanks, you've done so much already toda--.

Quick as a snake, the Other Mother GRABS Coraline's hand and stops her. Her heart pounds.

OTHER MOTHER
You're welcome. And I —
(smiles to Other Father)
we aren't worried at all, darling.
(whispers to her)
Your bed knows what your heart wants.

She lets go and she and the Other Father wave gently, mouthing "good night" as Coraline backs into the hallway.

INT. CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM - TWILIGHT

Nodding and waving, Coraline closes the door, then, as quickly and quietly as she can, she DRAGS a DESK, TWO CHAIRS, and a BOOKSHELF against it.

The LIVING TOYS — the paper butterflies, windup angels, stuffed animals — FLUTTER AROUND her innocent as puppies, wondering what's wrong. She CATCHES them one by one and places them in the TOY CHEST. The last one, a STAMPED METAL HORSE, finally GALLOPS out from under the bed into a wastebasket trap.

Coraline adds the toy chest to the BARRICADED DOOR, then, letting out a huge exhalation, she flops back on her bed. She's drenched in SWEAT. Out the window a huge, gorgeous FULL MOON is rising in the TOO BEAUTIFUL evening sky. What would have been magnificent to her not so long ago now looks pretty fake. Oh well.

She covers her eyes against the light and that sharp silver needle, and, knowing she must go to sleep to wake up in her own bed in her own life, she forces herself to stop shaking and begins to calm herself. WE PUSH IN close on her face and we begin to hear strange sounds: backward mice-singing, whispers, cheerful toy noises slowed down to molasses speed. Sleep finally wraps her and takes her to oblivion.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OTHER BEDROOM - DAY

SAME C.U. of her sleeping face. DAWN LIGHT slides diagonally on screen, touching her face and hands. She wakens, sliding her hands from her eyes. They open.

She starts to smile then freezes as a FLUTTERING SHADOW crosses her face.

HER P.O.V.: PAPER BUTTERFLY, FLYING ABOVE

She SCRAMBLES to her feet, frightened and unbelieving as the pink and green of her OTHER BEDROOM swim into FOCUS. SHE'S STILL IN THE OTHER WORLD. She starts to HYPERVENTILATE.

She HUGS HERSELF, gradually slowing her breathing. Her slept-in clothes are WET and COLD and WRINKLED.

The OTHER CLOTHES CLOSET is filled with perfectly-made Halloween costumes: a raggedy witch costume; an archeologist costume; a future-warrior costume; a slinky evening dress covered in feathers and mirrors. She pushes the costumes away but grabs a pair of bright blue boots on the bottom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She finds a pair of black velvet jeans, and a smoke-grey sweater with tiny stars in a chest of drawers. She pulls them out.

INT. OTHER FATHER'S STUDY - SAME

Coraline, dressed in the new outfit, opens the door and finds the Other Father sitting at his computer. Making her voice as brave-sounding as she can, she asks him:

CORALINE
Where's the Other Mother, I want to go home!

He stares at a blank screen, his stack of games and gardening magazines ignored. His fingers rest on the keyboard, not typing.

OTHER FATHER
(voice a little mushy)
She's patching cracks. There are some vermin problems.

CORALINE
What sort of vermin?

OTHER FATHER
Big black fellow, with his tail high.

CORALINE
(confused)
You don't mean the cat?

He turns around. Coraline WINCES at what she sees.

OTHER FATHER
That's the one.

His smiling face is BLOATED like rising bread dough. His Soderburgh glasses are crooked, his button eyes askew.

CORALINE
Uh. Maybe you should lie down or something, you're not looking too g--

He interrupts, his voice sounding programmed.

OTHER FATHER
Really, I mustn't talk to you when she's not here. But don't you worry. I shall demonstrate our tender hospitality to you, such that you will not even think about ever going back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He closes his mouth and folds his hands in his lap.

CORALINE
So what should I do now?

The Other Father points to his lips. Silence.

CORALINE (cont'd)
If you won't even talk to me, I'm going to find the Other Wybie. He'll help me.

OTHER FATHER
No point. He's in for repairs.

CORALINE
What do you mean?

OTHER FATHER
He pulled a long face...

He PULLS DOWN the corners of his mouth, impossibly far, then lets go. His skin is slow to regain shape. It all looks REALLY PAINFUL to Coraline.

OTHER FATHER (cont'd)
...and Mother didn't like it.

Then he looks embarrassed and puts one finger to his lips again, as if he's just said too much. Coraline leaves.

EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME

She exits the apartment to another beautiful day, past the flashing-lights stairwell of Young Spink and Forcible, past the fantastic garden, and through the patch of big old trees and beyond.

Coraline is surprised to see there is NO MEADOW, no old TENNIS COURT, only more trees. And the further she goes, the cruder and LESS TREE-LIKE they become.

Pretty soon they're just BRUSH STROKE trees: a greyish-brown smear for the trunk, a greenish splodge for the leaves.

The brush stroke trees give way to a PALE NOTHINGNESS, like a blank sheet of paper, or an enormous, empty white room. There is no sky, no horizon, no ground beneath her feet, just a milky whiteness. She continues walking when the BLACK CAT appears by her side.

CAT
And what do you think you're doing?

CONTINUED:

With no depth cues or shadows, the cat looks as BIG AS A LION. She blinks and it's as SMALL AS A MOUSE. She blinks once more and sees it actual-sized in the whiteness.

CORALINE
I'm exploring. Looking for all the ways out of here that I can get.

Its fur bristles and its eyes are wide, while its tail is down and between its legs. He's not a happy cat.

CAT
Nothing to find here. This is just the outside, the part of the place she hasn't bothered to create.

CORALINE
Why does she want me? Why does she want me to stay here with her?

CAT
She wants something to love, I think. Something that isn't her. She might want something to eat as well.

CORALINE
(alarm)
To eat?

CAT
It's hard to tell with creatures like that.

CORALINE
Do you have any advice?

The cat flicks its whiskers and answers:

CAT
Challenge her. There's no guarantee she'll play fair, but her kind of thing loves games and challenges.

CORALINE
What kind of thing is that?

The cat doesn't answer, just pads through the pale nothingness beside Coraline.

A shape begins to appear in front of them, something high and towering and dark.

CONTINUED: (2)

CORALINE (CONT'D)
You were wrong! There is something here!

And then it takes shape: a dark house, which looms at them out of the formless whiteness.

CORALINE (cont'd)
But that's —

CAT
The house you just left. Precisely.

CORALINE
But how can you walk away from something and still come back to it?

The cat curls its tail into a question mark, and tips its head to one side.

CAT
Easy. Walk around the world. You start out walking away from something and end up coming back to it.

CORALINE
Small world.

CAT
It's big enough for her. Spider's webs only have to be large enough to catch flies.

Coraline shivers.

CORALINE
He said that she's fixing all the cracks, to keep you out.

CAT
(unimpressed)
She may try. Oh yes, she may try.

They are standing under a clump of trees now, beside the house. These trees are much more convincing.

CAT (cont'd)
There's cat ways in and out of places like this that even she doesn't know about. Hang on--

It gives a shiver and a leap and before Coraline can blink the cat is sitting with its paw holding down a CUTE KANGAROO MOUSE. The cat speaks as if nothing has happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CAT (cont'd)
(silky smooth)
There are those who have suggested that the tendency of a cat to play with its prey is a merciful one...

CORALINE
What are you doing? He's probably in the mouse circus!

With that, the cat lets the mouse go. It hops several feet and then the cat, with one bound, is on it again.

CAT
...after all, it permits the occasional little snack to escape, from time to time. Want to see me do that again?

CORALINE
No. You're torturing the little thing.

CAT
Not so little. How often does your dinner get to escape?

It lets it go again. The mouse stumbles, dazed, for a few steps. With a blow of its paw, the cat knocks the mouse into the air, and catches it in its mouth.

CORALINE
Stop it!

The cat gives a quick bite to the mouse and drops it between its two front paws. It transforms into a LARGE DEAD BLACK RAT.

CAT
It's not that I like rats at the best of times, but the rats in this place are all spies for her, no matter how cute their disguises. She uses them as her eyes and hands...

It picks the rat up in its mouth and carries it off behind a tree. Coraline, with new respect for the arrogant feline, watches him go.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME

It's quiet and deserted. Dust specks hang in a beam of sunlight.

CONTINUED:

Coraline, approaches a mirror at the end of the hall. She watches her growing reflection, her mirrored self looking braver than she feels.

A HAND touches her shoulder, STARTLING her and she looks around. The OTHER MOTHER stares down at Coraline with her black button eyes. Coraline, terribly afraid at first, stares back and decides the buttons aren't scary, they're silly and ridiculous.

OTHER MOTHER
Coraline, my darling, I thought we could play some games together this morning, now you're back from your walk. Happy Families? Mythology Monopoly?

She starts to feel mad, and feeling mad makes her brave.

CORALINE
What happened to Wybie?

The Other Mother smiles.

OTHER MOTHER
Oh, he's all better now, perfectly happy. But what game shall we play?

Coraline shakes her head.

CORALINE
I don't want to play with you. I want to go home and be with my real parents. I want you to let me go.

The Other Mother shakes her head, very slowly.

OTHER MOTHER
Sharper than a serpent's tooth is a daughter's ingratitude. Still, the proudest spirit can be broken, with love.

Her long white fingers waggle and caress the air.

CORALINE
I have no plans to love you. No matter what. You can't make me love you.

OTHER MOTHER
Let's talk about it.

She turns and walks into the living room, her high heels CLICKING on the floor. Coraline follows.

INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She looks around the room. It's such a perfect replica of her real living room that it seems odd.

The Other Mother sits down on the big sofa. She picks up a shopping basket from beside the sofa, and takes out a white, rustling, paper bag. She extends it to Coraline.

OTHER MOTHER
(politely)
Would you like a sweet?

Coraline looks down. The bag is half-filled with large, shiny BLACK-BEETLES, crawling over each other in their efforts to get out. She shivers.

CORALINE
Ugh, I don't eat bugs.

Other mother pulls back the bag.

OTHER MOTHER
Don't be ridiculous, I made them myself just this mor--
(looks in)
Why there's nothing but black-beetles here.

She disdainfully lifts up a big one by its hind leg and studies it.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
And they've eaten all our candy.

She suddenly POPS THE BEETLE INTO HER MOUTH! CRUNCHING it happily, she says:

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Waste not, want not ... Mmmm mmmm.

She takes another. Coraline holds her queasy stomach.

CORALINE
Jamie Mellish ate bugs for a quarter, but that was in second grade. I think you're <u>way</u> more disgusting.

OTHER MOTHER
(swallows)
Is that any way to talk to your mother?

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
You aren't my mother.

Her Other Mother ignores this.

OTHER MOTHER
Now, I think you are a little overexcited, Coraline. Perhaps this afternoon we could paint designs on your fingernails or play a gentle hand of penny poker. Then dinner, and then, if you have been good, you may play with the mouse circus a little before bed. And I shall read you an adventure story and tuck you in, and kiss you good night.

Her long white fingers flutter gently and Coraline shivers.

CORALINE
No.

The Other Mother goes RIGID. She pops another black-beetle into her mouth, and then another, like someone with a bag of chocolate-covered raisins. Her black button eyes, DULL WITH ANGER, stare into Coraline's hazel eyes. Her black hair TWINES AND TWISTS like Medusa's snakes.

Coraline stares right back.

OTHER MOTHER
Manners!

She folds up the paper bag and stuffs it in the shopping basket. Then she stands up, TALLER THAN BEFORE. She clears her throat then spits out a small SILVER-COLORED KEY. She holds it up triumphantly then GRABS Coraline by the arm.

CORALINE
Ow, that hurts!

INT. OTHER HOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She PULLS Coraline into the hallway and DRAGS HER back to the mirror. Coraline struggles to break away but the Other Mother's grip is like steel.

CORALINE
Let go of me, let me go!

Then she pushes the key right into the glass surface and twists it.

CONTINUED:

The mirror OPENS LIKE A DOOR, revealing a dark space behind it. She picks Coraline up like a doll and TOSSES HER IN then slams the mirror-door shut. The Other Mother then thrusts her head THROUGH THE MIRROR like water--

INT. BEHIND THE MIRROR - CONTINUOUS

--and, glowing a pale green, stares down at Coraline. A fragment of beetle sticks to her lower lip and her dull button eyes DILATE AND CONTRACT with her angry heartbeat.

OTHER MOTHER
You may come out when you've learned some manners. And when you're ready to be a loving daughter.

She YANKS HER HEAD OUT and leaves Coraline in TOTAL DARKNESS.

A huge SOB wells up in Coraline's throat which she chokes off. She takes a breath then begins to explore her closet prison. We hear her fingertips SCRAPE rough cedar-board walls, gently SQUEAL on the smooth mirror-back, the CREAK of the oak floor. She tests and taps everywhere, looking for a way out, a handle, a latch, a light switch.

And then we hear a SOFT GHOSTLY VOICE.

1ST VOICE
Shhhhhhhhh.

She gasps.

1ST VOICE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Hush! And shush! Say nothing, for the beldam might be listening!

Coraline says nothing. ANOTHER VOICE, hesitant, and very faint speaks.

2ND VOICE
Art thou — art thou alive?

CORALINE
(whispers)
Yes.

And a THIRD VOICE joins.

3RD VOICE
Poor child.

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
(whispers)
Who are you?

1ST VOICE
(faraway and lost)
Names, names, names.

3RD VOICE
The names are the first things to go, after the breath has gone, and the beating of the heart. We keep our memories longer than our names.

Coraline can now make out three shapes, each as faint as a moon in the daytime sky. They are the GHOSTS OF THREE CHILDREN. By their faint light, we can SEE Coraline.

The SMALLEST GHOST comes closer.

2ND GHOST
I still 'member my grammie on some May mornin', carryin' my hoop and stick, and the sun behind her, and all the tulips bobbin' in the breeze. But I've done forgot the name of my grammie, and of the tulips, too.

CORALINE
I don't think tulips have names. They're just tulips.

2ND GHOST
Could be. They were red, and orange-and-red, and red-and-yellow, like the sparkers in the fire on a winter night. I 'member 'em.

This ghost is so sad that Coraline reaches for its cold hand and SQUEEZES it tightly. She thinks this is the GHOST OF A YOUNG BOY.

CORALINE
What happened to you all? Why are you here?

3RD GHOST
In each of our lives, we had the same little doll, first one of us, then the next.

This is the GHOST OF A SWEET GIRL, just Coraline's size. The 1st ghost, ANOTHER GIRL, taller and emotional, continues:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

1ST GHOST
It saw us with the beldam's true eyes, the black button ones, and told her we weren't happy.

Coraline nods, thinking of the button-eyed doll on her pillow back home.

2ND GHOST
Oh, but we *wuz* happy, so happy.

1ST GHOST
She tricked and trapped us. Then she fed on our lives and all we were and all we care'st for and she left us here and forgot about us in the dark.

CORALINE
You poor things. How long have you been here?

2ND GHOST
Such a long time.

3RD GHOST
Time enough for days to become dust and the leaves to fall and the years to pass one after the next like the ticking of a clock.

2ND GHOST
I walked through the cook-room door, and found m'self back in the parlor. But she was waitin' for me. She tole me she was my other mamma, but I never saw my true mamma again.

He pulls his hand from Coraline's and lowers his head. The tall ghost-girl becomes desperate:

1ST GHOST
Flee, miss! Flee, while there's still air in your lungs and blood in your veins and warmth in your heart. Flee while you still have your mind and your soul!

The other ghosts hug her tightly and calm her a bit. Coraline thinks a little and says.

CORALINE
She won't keep me in the dark forever. She brought me here to play games. "Games and challenges," the cat said.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CORALINE (cont'd)
I'm not much of a challenge here in the dark.

A silent moment.

3RD GHOST
Perhaps, if you do win your escape, you could also win free our hearts.

CORALINE
How?

3RD GHOST
By finding our souls.

CORALINE
Has she taken those, too?

1ST GHOST
Yes, miss. And hidden them.

3RD GHOST
That is why we could not leave here, when we died. Find our secret souls, young mistress.

CORALINE
And what will happen to you if I do?

The ghosts PULSE faintly like afterimages but say nothing.

Coraline, sits down and leans against the mirror door. She rolls up her starry sweater and puts it behind her head. She bounces her head against the sweater again and again, trying to think. She's not hopeless, not yet.

Without warning, the MIRROR DOOR FLIES OPEN and Coraline FALLS BACKWARDS. A hand COVERS HER SCREAM and she's DRAGGED into the hallway. The mirror shuts to black, the ghosts WAILING.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - DAY

C.U. of Coraline's WILD EYES as she TEARS at the hands that hold her. She PULLS OFF the one on her mouth and WRENCHES HER HEAD AROUND.

It's the OTHER WYBIE, BUTTON-EYED and "REPAIRED": BARBED HOOKS pull the corners of his mouth into a PAINFUL, EAR TO EAR SMILE; his LIPS ARE SEWN SHUT with coarse black thread. Coraline is HEARTSICK.

CORALINE
Oh Wybie, what did she ... how'd you ...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He stops her with a finger to her lips. He produces the MIRROR-KEY, pantomimes how he stole it from the mouth of the napping Other Mother. They must hurry before she awakens.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
You know a way out of this world?

He nods sharply and takes her hand. She resists, looking back to the mirror.

CORALINE (cont'd)
They asked me to find their souls, the ghosts in there.

He shakes his head in a frantic "no", tapping his wristwatch. She lowers her guilty eyes and mouths "okay". They head down the hall.

INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM — CONTINUOUS

He hurries her toward the BIG WOODEN DOOR in the corner. Other Wybie grabs the handle of the great door and turns it. It's rusted and slow but it gives. Then, with all his might, he PULLS THE DOOR OPEN. A FREEZING WIND blows from the DARK PASSAGEWAY that's revealed. Other Wybie urges her to enter. Coraline hesitates, afraid for him.

CORALINE
(anxious)
But what will the Other Mother do to you now? I don't want her hurting you anymore, I...

He rips his shirt open. She gasps. There is no skin, no flesh and blood; there are only corn husks. He is a LIVING CORN HUSK DOLL. He YANKS OUT a handful and lets them fall to the floor with a nonchalant shrug. Then they hear HIGH HEELS CLICKING IN THE HALLWAY.

THE OTHER MOTHER IS COMING!

Coraline takes a quick breath and looks a last time at Other Wybie.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Thank you.

She spins, sets her jaw, and...

INT. OTHER HALLWAY — CONTINUOUS

...STEPS INTO the passageway. The door bangs shut. She quickly walks forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THIS passageway is COLD and DANK and SMELLY, there are STRANGE WHISPERING VOICES on the wind. The walls around her GLISTEN with THICK SLIME that seems to UNDULATE. Her heart BEATS HARD and LOUD in her chest. She closes her eyes and moves on, walking FASTER AND FASTER.

She starts to feel DIZZY, and reaches her arms out for balance. She BUMPS into something and opens her eyes with a STARTLED GASP.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She has bumped into an ARMCHAIR, in her REAL LIVING ROOM. The open doorway behind is blocked by ROUGH RED BRICKS. She is home. Coraline slams the big door shut and turns the cold black key, still in the keyhole, to lock it.

She calls out.

CORALINE
I'M HOME!

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

She walks from one end to the other, pushing shut doors open, calling:

CORALINE
Hello, hello, hello... Anybody here? Mom..? Dad..?

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Coraline hangs the bunch of keys above the door.

There are bags of groceries on the table, as if her mother had just gotten in. She hops down to take a peek and finds that most of the food is going bad. Euww. She dumps the bags in the garbage.

Door bell rings.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She runs excitedly to the door, calling to her parents:

CORALINE
Finally! You could at least act like responsible parents and leave me a note or someth--

EXT. FRONT DOOR

But it's just Wybie, the one that talks too much.

CORALINE
Oh, it's you.

He seems anxious.

WYBIE
Uh, hi C girl. I, uh, I think he might be injured or trapped or maybe he ate a bad mouse and went and holed up where I can't find him, you know, just until he feels better?

Coraline's face says, "hunh?"

WYBIE (CONT'D)
The cat, of course — he's still missing. Got any ideas?

Coraline takes a deep breath, not sure what to say, then goes ahead.

CORALINE
I might, but I doubt you'd believe me.

She lets him follow her inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He looks around, curious to be in his grandmother's old house. She points to the big locked door.

CORALINE
Last time I saw him was on the other side of that door. He might be there now.

Wybie thinks it's a little strange his cat would be here. He goes to open the door.

WYBIE
It's, uh, locked. Think you could you open it?

CORALINE
Not in a million years. Besides, he said there's cat ways in and out of the other place, he doesn't need that door.

WYBIE
The cat said?

CONTINUED:

Coraline nods hard.

Wybie decides she's joking or something. He wanders around the room a little.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
You know, my grandmother hasn't been back here since she was a girl. Never wanted to.
(awkward)
She, uh, she told me I have to get the doll back from you.

Coraline tenses.

WYBIE (cont'd)
She's pretty mad; said it's dangerous or something. Wouldn't tell me *how* it's dangerous, like it's toxic or it's got some kind of legionnaire spores or --

CORALINE
(insisting)
Where did she get it, where did Granny get the doll?

Beat.

WYBIE
Oh, uh, turns out it was her sister's when they were kids. I found it in Gran's trunk...
(sheepish)
...figured she'd never miss it.

Coraline's got a bad feeling.

CORALINE
Something happen to her sister, something bad when they were kids?

Wybie nods, surprised.

WYBIE
Well Gran's got this crazy idea that--?

Coraline grabs his hand and pulls him with her.

CORALINE
Come on. I'll be <u>happy</u> to give you that doll back!

CUT TO:

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

The doll is not on her bed, not on the chair. Coraline tears her room apart looking for it.

CORALINE
Where are you hiding, monster doll; spy doll; voodoo doll?

Wybie watches nervously while Coraline pulls out her dresser drawers, yanks cushions off chairs.

WYBIE
You act like you believe her or--

CORALINE
Granny's little doll nearly got my eyes buttoned and my life sucked out! Like the dead kids behind the mirror; like Granny's sister!

WYBIE
(spooked)
Her dead ... kid sister? Look, I don't know where your parents are but maybe you should--

Her thoughts turn to them.

CORALINE
Mom and Dad must think I ran away...which I sort of did...
(looks up)
But when I tried to wake up in my own bed I was still in the other place.
(sad)
I would never have escaped if it wasn't for Other Wybie.

Wybie's desperate to lighten her mood.

WYBIE
Are you saying there's another poor kid stuck with my name?! Ha ha, now I know you're making everything u-- OW!

He rubs his arm where Coraline just hit him with a tossed SHOE. She readies another and he backs towards the door.

WYBIE (cont'd)
Look, I'll just tell Gran you couldn't--

She fires, he ducks and runs. She storms after him...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

...down the hall to the front door. He throws the door open--

CORALINE
Go ahead, DON'T believe me OR your grandmother, you --

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

--and runs out. Coraline stops there.

CORALINE
-- IDIOT LOSER CREEP ... SUPREME!

DOOR SLAM. Wybie is shaking from her outburst, speechless for once. Then he notices that the Old Man Upstairs and Miss Spink and Miss Forcible have cracked open their doors to see what's the ruckus. He starts to speak in a loud cheery tone:

WYBIE
Yeah, sorry, but I really have to go, you know; still looking for my cat and all. Of course, if you do happen to--

She pulls the blinds aside and GLARES at him, her face crimson. He waves feebly and backs away, tripping on the steps. He scrambles to his feet, hops on his scooter and tears out.

Coraline watches him leave, then spots the JONES' JEEP sitting at the side of the driveway. She runs out to find it's EMPTY. Rummaging inside, she discovers her mother's CELL PHONE. She turns it on, and, closing her eyes a moment to remember, punches in some numbers. She hears it ringing, once, three times...

CORALINE
Pick it up Dad, pick it up.

VOICE RECORDING (V.O.)
Your call has been forwarded to an automatic voice messaging --

She hits the off button.

INT. MISSES SPINK AND FORCIBLE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Coraline anxiously sips tea with Miss Spink and Miss Forcible. The dogs seem more worried about Coraline than their masters do. Miss Spink holds out an old scrapbook.

CONTINUED:

MISS SPINK
Atlantic city, 1948. A great triumph for us.

She points at the yellowed old newsprint headlines and crumbling photos of the young Miss Spink and Forcible in various costumes and settings.

MISS FORCIBLE
We broke records, April and I, the show was held over for sixteen weeks! It's all here in the press clippings.

MISS SPINK
Be sure to tell your mother, dearie, she seemed especially interested when Miriam mentioned them to her.

CORALINE
(impatient)
But I told you, she's disappeared, vanished; and I believe my father has as well. They could have gone to dinner or the movie's or even mushroom hunting but the car's out front and they never walk.

MISS SPINK
Hmmm. That's too bad, we were hoping they might give us a lift to see "Twelfth Night" tomorrow. Go on Miriam, show her our complimentary tickets.

While Miss Forcible waves the tickets like she's won the lottery, Miss Spink gets up from her armchair, goes to the fireplace, and takes a jar from the mantelpiece. She spills the contents into her hand: a tiny china duck, a thimble, a strange little coin, two paperclips, and a STONE WITH A HOLE IN IT.

She passes the stone to Coraline.

CORALINE
What's this for?

MISS SPINK
It might help. They're good for bad things, sometimes.

MISS FORCIBLE
And lost things, other times.

CONTINUED: (2)

Coraline holds the stone up to the window well and looks through its hole. Things do look a little different, a little distorted, colors off, light rays bent.

MISS FORCIBLE (cont'd)
You haven't got a drivers license, have you Caroline luvvy?

She shakes her head. Her stomach growls and she looks down.

CUT TO:

INT. FATHER'S STUDY - NIGHT

Coraline holds the phone to her ear, a plate full of half-eaten toast and peanut butter and an empty bottle of cream soda at her side. She repeats the same message she heard earlier:

CORALINE
(mocking)
If you have reached this recording in error, please hang up--

She hangs up.

CORALINE (cont'd)
--and try again.

She wakes her father's computer and starts to write a story:

CORALINE'S STORY

THERE ONCE WAS A GIRL, HER NAME WAS STUPIDITY. SHE USED TO DANCE A LOT. SHE DANCED AND DANCED UNTIL HER FEET TURNED INTO SOSSAJUS. "BREAKFAST IS READY" CRIED THE HUNGRY MICE, AND STUPIDITY NEVER DANCED AGAIN.

THE END

She pushes "spell check" and turns sossajus in sausages. She prints out the story and draws a picture of a girl dancing under the words on the page. A picture of herself.

She stares at the drawing which goes out of focus and then starts to come to life, in crude animation, the dancer moving faster and faster and--

Coraline rips the paper in half. She yawns, exhausted.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Coraline, dressed for bed in a long tee shirt and pajama bottoms, takes a pee, and yawns.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

It's very late. She wakes with a start and puts on her dressing gown and fuzzy slippers and walks —

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

— into her parent's room. The bed is made and empty. A digital clock glows 1:12 AM. She calls out:

CORALINE
Mom!... Dad!... I give up, you can come out now!

No answer. And Coraline BEGINS TO CRY, for the FIRST TIME. It's the only sound in the empty house.

She climbs into her parent's bed, and goes to sleep.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - SAME

Hour later. Coraline is woken by cold paws, batting her face. She opens her eyes. BIG GREEN EYES stare back at her. It's the BLACK CAT.

CORALINE
Hello. How did you get in?

The cat doesn't say anything. She gets out of bed and puts her slippers and gown on.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Have you come to tell me something?

The cat yawns, his eyes flashing green.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Do you know where Mom and Dad are?

The cat blinks at her, slowly.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Is that a yes?

CONTINUED:

The cat blinks again.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Will you take me to them?

The cat stares at her. Then it walks out the door. She follows.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They walk to the very end of the dark corridor, where the mirror hangs. Coraline turns the hall light on.

HER PARENTS ARE IN THE MIRROR.

Coraline's hands FLY to her mouth.

Mom and Dad seem sad and alone. They shiver with cold, lips blue, a few blurry snowflakes falling around them. As Coraline watches, they WAVE TO HER, slowly, with limp hands. Coraline's father has one arm around her mother.

They stare at her. Her father opens his mouth and speaks but Coraline hears nothing. Her mother BREATHES on the inside of the mirror-glass, and writes with a softly squeaking fingertip, a sound like the chirp of a very sad bird:

SU PLEH ("HELP US" backwards)

The FOG FADES and so do HER PARENTS, and now the mirror only reflects the corridor and Coraline, and the cat.

CORALINE
(shaky, to cat)
How?

The cat trots back to the bedroom.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - SAME

The cat darts under the bed as Coraline stands waiting. A moment later, it drags out the BUTTON-EYED DOLL, TRANSFORMED. On the front side with one button eye like a cyclops, it RESEMBLES HER MOTHER; on the back side with the other button eye, it RESEMBLES HER FATHER.

Coraline, enraged, quotes a ghost child.

CORALINE
It found them with the beldam's true eyes, the black buttons, and told her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She takes the doll from the cat and TEARS OFF the eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM, FRONT OF FIREPLACE - SAME

CLOSE UP of corn husk doll burning to a crisp.

REVERSE ON Coraline and the cat, faces illuminated by the fire. She takes out the button eyes and pounds them to bits on the hearthstone with a fireplace tool.

CORALINE
(to cat)
Mom and Dad. They're not going to come back, are they? Not under their own steam.

The cat blinks in agreement.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Got it. Then I guess there's only one thing left to do.

CUT TO:

INT. FATHER'S STUDY - SAME

Coraline sits at the desk with the phone receiver to her ear. The cat lies uncomfortably on the blotter, annoyed with her. She dials 9-1-1. There's two outgoing rings then a gruff voice answers:

POLICEMAN (o.s.)
Police.

CORALINE
Hello. My name is Coraline Jones.

POLICEMAN
You're up kind of late, aren't you kid?

CORALINE
Probably, but I'm calling to report a kidnapping. Adult-napping really.
(deep breath)
You see, my parents have been stolen away into a world on the other side of the mirror in our hall.

POLICEMAN
(smile in voice)
Hmmm. And who stole 'em, the Red Queen from "Alice in Wonderland"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cat bats at the phone cord, knowing this is going nowhere.

CORALINE
(very serious)
The Other Mother did – we all have one you know. She probably lured them through the brick wall when I was trapped with the ghost children. It could have been earlier, when I was talking to the cat – I'm not sure.

POLICEMAN
I suppose you know why they were stolen?

CORALINE
She may want to sew their eyes with black buttons or she's hoping to lure me back using them as bait. It could be both, I'm not sure.

Pause.

POLICEMAN
You know what I suggest, kid?

CORALINE
No. What?

POLICEMAN
(reassuring)
Ask your mother to make you a big old cup of hot chocolate, and then give you a hug. There's nothing like hot chocolate and a hug to make the nightmares go away. And if she starts to tell you off for waking her up, you tell her it was Sergeant Olsmolski's idea.

Coraline is not reassured.

CORALINE
Great, when I see her, I'll tell her that.

She hangs up the phone and turns to the cat.

CORALINE (cont'd)
You were right, it didn't work. Guess we have to do it the hard way.

CONTINUED: (2)

The cat, stops licking his fur, stands up and leads the way into the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Coraline takes a flashlight out from under the sink. It's dim beam barely lights the cat's eyes.

She finds an emergency candle and matches and a sack of cooking apples and puts one in each pocket.

She gets the string of keys down and removes the COLD BLACK KEY.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

The room is dark. They approach the big door in the corner. It's as if the door is looking at her, is warping ever so slightly with anticipation. The cat meows at her in an "aren't you forgetting something" way.

CORALINE
(to cat)
Thanks, I completely forgot.

CUT TO:

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME

She digs in the her jeans pocket and pulls out the STONE WITH THE HOLE IN IT the old ladies gave her. She drops it in her dressing gown pocket

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Coraline stands in front of the big door, lights the candle then takes the cold black key from her pocket. She places it in the keyhole but doesn't turn it yet. She takes a breath and begins a story, speaking to the cat by her feet.

CORALINE
A long time ago, when I was little, we lived in a house near the dump. Mom and Dad made me promise never to go exploring there – I might get locked in an old freezer or cut myself on something. But Dad knew I was aching to go, so one day he put on his mud boots and put my boots on me and we went for a walk.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DUMP, YELLOW FILTER - DAY

A little girl's ANIMAL BOOTS enter and leave bottom frame as we follow a YOUNGER, TALLER version of Coraline's Dad. The scene unfolds as Coraline describes it, most everything seen from a four-year-old Coraline's POV.

CORALINE (V.O.)
The dump was filled with all sorts of neat stuff — old exercise equipment and rusty bed springs and mountains of broken dishes and dolls with no arms and no legs. We walked down a hill to see an old tractor by a stream.

Her Dad climbs up on an old tractor seat.

CORALINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Dad pretended he was a farmer. I looked around for something I could ride, then I saw it, a little pedal car.

Her POV moves past an old wringer washer and onto a rusted turquoise PEDAL CAR. WE climb in and the camera goes under the dash to see her feet try and push the pedals.

CORALINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Something crunched like a big ice cream cone when I tried to make it go.

Camera moves past her feet and pedals to discover a HUGE HORNETS' NEST built around the rods and cranks. Coraline's actions are starting to TEAR the hive apart and ANGRY HORNETS fly out.

CORALINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Then the motor began to buzz...
(angry hornets)
...and it started to move.

Her POV again over hood of car as she drives past washer and towards Dad on the tractor. Her hand goes up to wave.

CORALINE (cont'd) (V.O.)
(CONT'D)
Dad started to wave back and then a terrible look came on his face.

We see his look of fright then...

CUT TO:

CONTINUED:

HIS POV

The hornet's nest, ripped in half, drops down in front of the little car. Dozens of hornets shoot out into the air.

ON DAD AGAIN

He jumps from the tractor, tearing off his shirt, and races towards us.

CORALINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I felt something stick me in my arm and burn, then my neck. Then I saw them: hundreds of angry hornets. I began to scream but Dad threw his shirt around me and pulled me up in his arms and began to run.

We see him throw his shirt around us and, in partial dark, we are carried up and away from the danger. Feet pound, his heart races, but the droning sound fades.

CORALINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He carried me up the hill like a bull elephant, ran until his heart almost burst.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AS BEFORE

Growing impatient, the cat briskly washes his face and whiskers. Coraline reaches down and strokes its neck. The cat stands up, walks out of reach, sits down and looks at her.

CORALINE
Dad had almost a hundred stings and had to go to the emergency room for a shot of adrenaline. I told him how brave he'd been, to protect me with his shirt and get stung all over so I wouldn't have to.

Coraline turns the key in the door. It turns with a CLUNK. The door swings open. The heavenly smells of chocolate and cinnamon and baking, more delicious than any cooking smells before, waft into their nostrils. Coraline sniffs the fragrant air, but doesn't care, doesn't move.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
But he said that wasn't brave of him, doing that, taking the stings.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She steps into the corridor. The cat pads along beside her, on alert, and speaks.

CAT
And why was that?

CORALINE
It wasn't brave because he wasn't afraid. He loved me and it was the only thing he could do. .

The candle casts huge, strange, flickering shadows along the wall. There are deep sounds and little scrabblings. The cat's fur bristles and its tail sticks up like a bottle brush.

CAT
And that's why you're going back to her world, then? Because he once saved you from wasps?

CORALINE
Don't be silly. I'm going back for them because they're my parents. And they'd do the same for me. You know you're talking again?

CAT
How fortunate I am, in having such a wise and observant traveling companion.

SOMETHING SKITTERS up the wall and the candle is SUDDENLY BLOWN OUT. A bright hall light GOES ON at the end of the corridor. HER MOTHER, hair chopped short, in her catalog clothes and plain shoes, stands there, SILHOUETTED, and calls out with a joy-filled voice.

MOTHER
Coraline? CORALINE?

CORALINE
(relieved)
MOM?!

She runs forward eagerly.

MOTHER
Darling! Why did you run away from me?

CONTINUED:

Coraline is too close to stop as the woman MORPHS INTO THE OTHER MOTHER, button-eyed in black and red, and wraps her COLD ARMS around her. Coraline goes rigid. The black cat has DISAPPEARED.

CORALINE
Where are my parents?

OTHER MOTHER
We're here, we're here. We're ready to love you and play with you and feed you and make your life interesting.

Coraline SQUEEZES the stone in her pocket. Her Other Mother's HANDS SCUTTLE OFF Coraline like frightened spiders.

The Other Father stands up from a chair and smiles. His appearance is STARTLING. He's a FOOT SHORTER than last time and resembles a COLLAPSED SOUFFLÉ. It's as if the Other Mother doesn't have the energy to waste on anyone's appearance but herself.

OTHER FATHER
(rubbery voice)
Mother is making snacks in the kitchen. And you'll want something to drink – hot chocolate perhaps?

She ignores him and goes to the mirror at the end of the hallway. There's nothing reflected in it but herself, her eyes still puffy from crying. She makes the bravest face she can and turns around.

CORALINE
I don't want your food, I want my parents back.

She takes an apple from her pocket and bites into it enthusiastically. The Other Mother's eyes glitter and gleam, her full set of teeth GROWN A TINY BIT TOO LONG.

OTHER MOTHER
Whatever would I have done with your old parents? If they have left you, Coraline, it must be because they became bored of you, or tired.

The Other Mother's wet-looking hair starts to DRIFT around her head like sleepy sea-snakes.

CONTINUED: (2)

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
Now we will never become bored of you, and we will never abandon you. You will always be safe here with us.

CORALINE
They weren't bored of me. You're lying. You stole them.

OTHER MOTHER
Silly, silly Coraline. They are fine wherever they are.

Coraline glares at her.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
I'll prove it.

She shrugs and BRUSHES the hallway mirror surface with her LONG, WHITE FINGERS. It FOGS over, then clears to reflect a DAYLIGHT REALITY where Coraline can see all the way down to the FRONT DOOR. The door opens and Coraline's MOTHER and FATHER walk in. They carry suitcases.

CORALINE'S FATHER
That was a great vacation.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
(happy)
How nice it is, not to have Coraline any more. Now we can do all the things we always wanted to, like travel abroad or enjoy gourmet dining. A young daughter sure gets in the way.

CORALINE'S FATHER
And, I take great comfort in knowing that her other mother will take better care of her than we ever could.

The mirror FOGS AND FADES and again reflects the night.

OTHER MOTHER
See?

Coraline stares at the mirror with a worm of doubt but hides it in her answer.

CORALINE
No, I don't see. And I don't believe it either.

CONTINUED: (3)

She whips around to catch REAL ANGER flash across the Other Mother's face. Now Coraline's sure her mirror parents were an illusion.

She's led into the living room with the Other Father and...

INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM - PRE-DAWN

...sat down on the sofa. The Other Mother points at her.

OTHER MOTHER
Please, don't be difficult.

The Other Mother CLAPS her hands twice. There's a SCRABBLING sound and an UGLY BLACK RAT appears at her feet. It sits on its haunches and STARES up at her.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
Bring me the key.

The rat chitters, then it runs through the OTHER BIG WOODEN DOOR that leads back to Coraline's own apartment.

Coraline eats her apple, trying to act disinterested.

The rat returns, DRAGGING THE KEY behind him.

CORALINE
Why don't you have your own key on this side?

OTHER FATHER
There is only one key. Only one door.

OTHER MOTHER
(venomous)
Hush!

He collapses a little more. The Other Mother sweetens her tone.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
You must not bother our darling Coraline's head with such trivialities.

She puts the key in the keyhole, and twists. The lock is stiff, but it CLUNKS CLOSED. She drops the key into her apron pocket. Outside, the sky has lightened to a LUMINOUS GREY. She turns to the Other Father.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
Why don't you go work in the garden, the squash need tending, don't you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OTHER FATHER
Squish squash, pumpkin sauce.

She places her long white fingers on the MUSHY SHOULDERS of the Other Father, turns him and pushes him from the room.

OTHER MOTHER
Your father's going a little soft in the head. I'll meet you in the kitchen, after I plant him with the other vegetables.

Coraline waits a moment, then walks over to the other big wooden door. She pulls it, rattles and shakes it. No, it's locked fast.

She studies the room: there's the painting on the wall of the bowl of fruit; there's the low wooden table with the lion's feet; there's the blackened fireplace.

Just like the real living room – nothing taken away, nothing added. She whispers:

CORALINE
Where did she hide them?

NEW ANGLE ON HER

We look down on her slightly, the image distorted as if seen through a glass bottle. Soft white dots float slowly down, out-of-focus near the lens. She walks very close, never looking to camera and whispers again, her voice echoey and very far away:

CORALINE (cont'd)
Where?

Someone very close breathes out and mist fills the frame.

CUT TO:

INT. OTHER KITCHEN - DAY

EARLY MORNING. Coraline waits at the table. The Other Mother enters, wipes off her hands and peeks in the oven. The smell of baking cinnamon buns fill the air. Coraline ignores the delicious smell.

CORALINE
There were ghost children in the closet. Old ones, from a long time ago.

CONTINUED:

OTHER MOTHER
Were there?

She bustles between the pans and the fridge, bringing out eggs and cheeses, butter and a slab of sliced pink bacon.

CORALINE
Yes, there were. I think you're planning to turn me into one of them. A dead shell.

Her Other Mother smiles gently. With one hand she cracks the eggs into a bowl, with the other she whisks them and whirls them.

OTHER MOTHER
Now, I think you're being silly dear. I love you. I will always love you. Nobody sensible believes in ghosts anyway -- that's because they're all such liars.

She pours the yellow mixture into the pan.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
Cheese omelette. Your favorite.

As casually as she can, Coraline asks:

CORALINE
Why don't we play a game? I know you like them.

The Other Mother's button eyes FLASH.

OTHER MOTHER
Everybody likes games.

CORALINE
Yes.

The bacon sizzles and spits on the stove. It smells wonderful.

OTHER MOTHER
What kind of game would it be? A riddle game? A test of knowledge? Or of skill?

CORALINE
An exploring game. A finding things game.

She tries to act disinterested, but her fingers twitch and drum and she licks her lips with her scarlet tongue.

CONTINUED: (2)

OTHER MOTHER
And what is it you think you should be finding in this hide-and-go-seek game, Coraline Jones?

Coraline hesitates.

CORALINE
My parents.

OTHER MOTHER
Too easy.

CORALINE
And the souls of the children behind the mirror.

The Other Mother drops bacon strips in perfect parallels on a plate. Then she flips the omelette into the air which lands beside it, perfectly folded, as light and puffy as a souffle.

She places the meal in front of Coraline, along with warm cinnamon buns and a mug of frothy hot chocolate. Coraline ignores it.

OTHER MOTHER
What exactly are you offering?

Coraline grips her knees under the table to stop them from shaking.

CORALINE
If I lose I'll stay here with you forever and I'll let you love me. I'll eat your food, and play Happy Families. And I'll let you sew buttons into my eyes.

Her Other Mother stares at her.

OTHER MOTHER
That sounds very fine. And if you do not lose?

CORALINE
Then you let me go. You let everyone go — my real father and mother, the dead children, everyone you've trapped here.

The Other Mother smiles triumphantly, and Coraline wonders if she's made the right choice.

CONTINUED: (3)

OTHER MOTHER
Deal. You'll have until time's up to do your best.

Coraline hadn't counted on this.

CORALINE
Well, how long is that?

The Other Mother improvises a little ditty.

OTHER MOTHER
When your omelette falls, when the web unwinds, when the world goes flat, you've no more time. Clever, don't you think?

Coraline stares at the breakfast, wondering how long it takes for an omelette to fall. She looks up.

CORALINE
How do I know you'll keep your word?

OTHER MOTHER
I swear it. I swear it by my right hand.

She holds it up and waggles the long fingers slowly, displaying her claw-like nails.

CORALINE
(shrugs)
Okay. It's a deal.

Her Other Mother stares at her. Though her shiny, black eyes are expressionless, she somehow LOOKS HUNGRY.

Coraline stands up, ignoring the delicious food, and starts looking around the kitchen. She opens the oven, peers into the freezer, pokes into the salad crisper in the fridge. The Other Mother follows her with a smirk hovering at the edge of her lips.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
How big are souls anyway?

The Other Mother sits down at the kitchen table and leans back against the wall, saying nothing. She raises a long crimson FINGERNAIL to her black button EYE, and begins to gently tap-tap-tap against its polished surface.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Fine. Don't tell me. I don't care. Everyone knows that a soul is the same size as a beach ball.

CONTINUED: (4)

But the Other Mother simply smiles, the tap-tap-tapping of her fingernail like the steady, relentless drip of a leaky faucet into a metal sink. And then, somehow, it *is* simply the noise of a dripping faucet, and Coraline is ALONE in the room.

Coraline shivers. She puts her hands in her pockets and closes her fingers around the STONE WITH THE HOLE IN IT. She pulls it out and, holding in front of her LIKE A GUN, walks out into the hall.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME

Empty. She glances at the mirror at the end of the hall and sees only herself, a frightened twelve-year-old girl who's holding SOMETHING THAT GLOWS GENTLY, like a green coal.

Coraline looks at the nondescript BROWN PEBBLE in her hand, surprised. Then she looks back at the mirror where it GLIMMERS like an emerald. A TRAIL OF GREEN FIRE blows from the pebble in the mirror, and DRIFTS toward Coraline's bedroom.

CORALINE

Hmm...

CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM - SAME

It's different now, worn, colors faded. The toys, looking shabby, still flutter excitedly as she walks in. A RUSTY LITTLE TANK climbs out of the toy box to greet her. It falls onto the floor, and lands like a beetle on its back, grumbling and grinding its treads before Coraline picks it up and turns it over.

Coraline looks around the room.

She looks in the closets and the drawers. Then she picks up one end of the toy box and gently tips all the toys out onto the carpet. A grey marble rolls across the floor and clicks against the wall.

She examines a tarnished silver CHARM-BRACELET adorned with tiny animals which CHASE EACH OTHER around and around the bracelet.

She's about to leave and look elsewhere. And then she STOPS, remembering something.

She picks up the STONE WITH A HOLE IN IT, and holds it to her RIGHT EYE and LOOKS AT THE ROOM.

CONTINUED:

EVERYTHING IS GREY like a pencil drawing. Then, SOMETHING GLINTS ON THE FLOOR, the color of an EMBER IN A FIREPLACE, of a SCARLET AND ORANGE TULIP. Coraline reaches out her left hand, scared if she takes her eye off the BURNING THING, it will vanish.

Her fingers close about SOMETHING SMOOTH AND COOL. She snatches it up, and lowers the viewing stone from her eye. The DULL GREY MARBLE from the toy box sits in her hand. She raises the viewing stone and looks at the marble once more. Again it BURNS AND FLICKERS with a red fire.

A young boy's voice whispers in her mind:

2ND GHOST CHILD VOICE (V.O.)
Bless you, miss, you've found me! Oh, but you dasn't tarry. There's two of us still lost, and the beldam's already got to boilin'.

She puts the marble into her dressing gown pocket and walks out to the hall.

INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME

Something STINGS her face and hands like angry sand blowing on a beach. She covers her eyes, and pushes forward to the front door. She somehow knows where next to look.

EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME

This Other Day is FADED and BLURRY. Coraline comes down the PORCH STEPS, then down the STONE STEPS to reach Young Spink and Forcible's BASEMENT THEATER. The chaser lights flicker RANDOMLY, their message ILLEGIBLE.

ANGLE ON ENTRANCE. The door is stuck. Locked? She gives it a shove, and, with a jerk, Coraline stumbles inside.

INT. YOUNG SPINK AND FORCIBLE'S THEATER - SAME

DIM. Coraline moves cautiously past the entry curtain. Her feet knock against something. She reaches down, picks up a flashlight, and clicks it on, sweeping the light beam around.

The theatre is abandoned. Chairs are BROKEN on the floor, and old, dusty SPIDERWEBS DRAPE THE WALLS and hang from the ROTTEN WOOD and the MILDEWED VELVET HANGINGS.

Something rustles above her. Coraline directs her light beam upwards, toward the ceiling.

CONTINUED:

The light startles a nest of bat-like creatures. One takes to the air and Coraline ducks as it swoops close to her. It has the wings and body of a LARGE FRUIT BAT, the head of a SCOTTIE DOG! She shivers.

Then she spots SOMETHING stuck on the back wall behind the ruined stage. It's greyish-white and TWICE THE SIZE of Coraline.

Her fingers sink into rotting wood as she scrambles onto the old stage. She sees that the thing on the wall is some kind of PAPER COCOON, like a HUGE CANDY SACK.

Inside the sack she can make out the shape of something that looks HUMAN, but with TWO MANY ARMS AND LEGS, colored and striped and twisted together like SALTWATER TAFFY. A SWEET SMELL fills her nostrils.

She holds the stone with the hole in it to her eye. There is a BROWN GLOW, as RICH AND BRIGHT as polished CHERRY WOOD, coming from inside the sack. Whatever is glowing is being held in ONE OF THE HANDS of the thing on the wall.

Coraline hesitates, frightened. Then she rolls up her right sleeve and PUSHES HER ARM through the paper sack. Her left hand holds the stone to her eye, guiding her right upward toward the brown glow, until she touches a STICKY COLD CANDY FIST. Her heart thumps. She carefully tugs the fist back through the tear in the sack, then, one by one, she PRIES the STRIPED TAFFY FINGERS open until another MARBLE falls into her hand. She picks up her flashlight.

Without warning, the HAND COMES TO LIFE and GRABS CORALINE'S ARM! She SCREAMS. Two more TAFFY HANDS tear through the sack and FOUR BLACK BUTTON EYES pop open to LOOK OUT and stare down at her. Coraline SHINES the flashlight right at them: It's YOUNG SPINK and FORCIBLE, MELTED and TWISTED together into one TAFFY MONSTER!

BLINDED, they recoil, and Coraline PULLS AWAY, STRETCHING AND STRETCHING THE CANDY ARM UNTIL IT SNAPS.

FORCIBLE/SPINK
(in unison)
Thief! Give it back! Stop! Thief!

The air COMES ALIVE with DOG-BATS. They FLAP AND DIVE at her, woofing raucously. Coraline FLAILS at them with the broken taffy arm.

The taffy monster TWISTS and WRIGGLES on the wall, fighting to break out of its paper cocoon.

CONTINUED: (2)

Coraline JUMPS down from the stage, looking for the way out. A GIRL'S VOICE SPEAKS inside Coraline's head:

1ST GHOST CHILD VOICE (V.O.)
Flee, Miss, flee now! You have two of us; flee this place while your blood still flows. Yonder's the door!

Coraline drops the marble into her pocket, beside the other. She SPOTS the door with her flashlight, runs to it, and WRENCHES it open.

CUT TO:

EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE, DISTORTED - DAY.

Outside, the world has become a FORMLESS, SWIRLING MIST with no shapes or shadows. Only the estate house remains, no longer grand but TWISTED and LEANING FORWARD, as if it's crouching and staring down at her with grey, slanted windows. Coraline wipes BITS OF TAFFY off her arm and looks up to the UPSTAIRS APARTMENT.

She CLIMBS the rickety outside stairs, stopping with a SHUDDER at the top. Tacked there on the door hangs a FLATTENED, LIFELESS SCARECROW – all that is left of OTHER WYBIE. Coraline grabs a loose thread from its grotesque smile and pulls. The thread tears out and the face relaxes. She takes two deep breaths, closes her eyes and speaks.

CORALINE
I'm <u>not</u> scared.

She KNOCKS on the green-painted door. It swings open, and she walks in.

INT. OTHER OLD MAN'S FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Coraline's nose is met with a TERRIBLE SMELL. The floor is strewn with all the SQUASH and PUMPKINS and FANTASTIC FLORA from the Other Garden, now dead and rotting. She PINCHES HER NOSTRILS SHUT.

Light filtering in through cracks in the slanted ceiling show there's not a sign of the miniature circus. Then a dozen small voices start to whisper and whine from the shadows. It is the Jumping Mice in their true form; a PACK OF VICIOUS BLACK RATS.

RATS
We have eyes and we have nerveses
We have tails, we have teeth,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RATS (cont'd)
You'll all get what you deserveses
When we rise from underneath.

RED EYES stare at her. SHARP-NAILED FEET scurry away as she comes close. Darker shadows slip through the shadows at the edges of things.

A RUSTLING VOICE in a far room in the back calls to her.

RUSTLING VOICE
Little girl.

CORALINE
Yes.

RUSTLING VOICE
Come here, little girl. I know what you want, little girl.

The voice is scratchy and dry like an enormous dead cicada.

CORALINE
(very soft)
I'm coming.

INT. OTHER OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Coraline enters, still holding her nose. The OTHER OLD MAN sits at the far end of the room, in broken shadows, bundled up in his coat and hat. His collar's up and a muffler covers his face completely. He takes a deep raspy breath and speaks.

RUSTLING VOICE
And what if you do win, little girl? What then? Nothing's changed. You'll go home. You'll be bored. You'll be ignored.

The voice is disembodied, nothing like the real Old Man's or even the Other Old Man's she met earlier.

RUSTLING VOICE (cont'd)
Stay here with us. We will listen to you and play with you and laugh with you.

CORALINE
And if I stay here will there be grey, wet days where I don't know what to do and there's nowhere to go and the day drags on forever?

RUSTLING VOICE
Never.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
And will there be awful meals, with food made from recipes, with garlic and tarragon and blue beans in it?

RUSTLING VOICE
(whispers)
Every meal will be a thing of joy.

CORALINE
And could I have day-glo green gloves to wear, and little kid rain boots in the shape of frogs?

RUSTLING VOICE
Frogs, ducks, rhinos, octopuses, whatever you desire. If you stay here, you can have whatever you want.

Coraline sighs.

CORALINE
You really don't get it, do you? What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted? Just like that, without whining or waiting...
(snaps fingers)
It wouldn't mean anything, would it?

RUSTLING VOICE
(more whispery)
I don't understand.

She raises the stone to her eye. There's a BLUE-WHITE GLOW coming from the coat of the man, about chest height. It twinkles like a star.

CORALINE
Of course you don't understand. You're just a bad copy she made of the Crazy Old Man Upstairs.

RUSTLING VOICE
(last breath)
Not even that any more.

Coraline takes a step closer to the man, and he FALLS APART. RATS leap from COAT SLEEVES and PANT LEGS, out the COLLAR and from under the HAT. The coat FLUTTERS AND FALLS TO THE FLOOR.

Coraline lets go of her nose and pulls the greasy coat open. There's NO SIGN of the final glass marble in it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She SCANS the room through the hole in the stone and CATCHES SIGHT of the BLUE-WHITE GLOW on the floor by the door. It's BEING CARRIED in the forepaws of the LARGEST BLACK RAT, who's heading out of the bedroom and TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR.

She GIVES FURIOUS CHASE.

INT. OTHER OLD MAN'S FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The OTHER RATS go to work, ROLLING ROTTEN PUMPKINS AND SQUASH in her path to slow her up. She jumps and skips, keeping her eyes fixed on the marble thief, almost to the door.

A HUGE PUMPKIN — with the OTHER FATHER'S FACE — rolls in the way! Startled, Coraline leaps, but the pumpkin moves with her and her foot PLUNGES RIGHT INTO IT, up to her knee. She trips forward, her momentum carrying her RIGHT OUT THE FRONT DOOR behind the big rat.

EXT. OTHER OLD HOUSE, FLATTENING - CONTINUOUS

The house has FLATTENED OUT, looking more like a PHOTO of a house than the real thing. Yelling, she tumbles HEAD OVER HEELS down the flimsy stairway, the pumpkin EXPLODING when she HITS the first landing. The landing FLEXES like a trampoline, and sends her PITCHING DOWN the rest of the stairs. She hits the ground with a cry and a WUMP, the air knocked out of her lungs.

Wheezing for breath, Coraline pushes up on hands and knees and looks around for the rat.

It's GONE, and the MARBLE with it.

A SCRAPED HAND stings, and there's BLOOD trickling down her ripped pajama leg from her knee. She feels nothing but COLD LOSS. She has FAILED the ghost children. She has FAILED her parents. She has FAILED herself, FAILED EVERYTHING.

She lowers her head, squeezing her eyes shut, and wishes that the earth would swallow her up.

There's a COUGH.

Her eyes blink open then widen: THE RAT is lying on the brick path at the bottom of the stairs, with a surprised look on its face -- which is now SEVERAL INCHES AWAY from the rest of it. Its whiskers are stiff, its eyes wide open, its teeth visible and yellow and not so sharp.

Beside the decapitated rat, is the BLACK CAT. It rests one paw on the GREY GLASS MARBLE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAT
I think I once mentioned that I don't like rats at the best of times. It looked like you needed this one, however. I hope you don't mind my getting involved.

CORALINE
I think ...

She tries to catch her breath.

CORALINE (cont'd)
... I think you may ... have said ... something like that.

The cat lifts its paw from the marble, which rolls toward Coraline. She picks it up. The SOUL within WHISPERS urgently in her mind::

3RD GHOST CHILD VOICE (V.O.)
She has lied to you. She will never give you up, now she has you. She will no more give any of us up than she can change her nature.

Coraline shakes her head, but knows it's true. She puts the marble in her dressing gown pocket with the others.

CORALINE
The Other Mother. She plans to break her promise. She won't let us go.

CAT
I wouldn't put it past her. Like I said, there's no guarantee she'll play fair.

He raises his head.

CAT (cont'd)
Hullo... did you see that?

CORALINE
What?

CAT
Look behind you.

The house has FLATTENED OUT almost completely. Instead of a photograph it looks more like a CRUDE, CHARCOAL DRAWING of a house on grey paper.

CONTINUED: (2)

CORALINE
I've got to hurry: time's almost up, and I haven't found my parents!
(very quickly)
Whatever happens, thank you for helping me. Go off into the mist or wherever you go, and I'll, well, I hope I get to see you at home. If she lets me go home.

The cat's fur is ON END, and its tail is BRISTLING like a bottle brush.

CORALINE (cont'd)
What's wrong?

CAT
They've gone. They aren't there any more — the ways in and out of this place. They just went flat.

CORALINE
Is that bad?

The cat lowers its tail, swishing it from side to side angrily, and pushes up against her leg. It makes a LOW GROWLING NOISE in the back of its throat. She puts down a hand to stroke it, and can feel how HARD AND FAST its heart is beating.

CORALINE (cont'd)
You'll be fine. Everything's going to be fine. I'll take you home.

The cat says nothing.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Come on, cat.

She takes a step toward the drawing of the house, but the cat stays where it is, looking miserable, and, oddly, much smaller.

CORALINE (cont'd)
If the only way out is past her, then that's the way we're going to go.

She bends down and picks him up. The trembling animal doesn't resist. She supports its bottom with one hand and rests its front legs on her shoulder.

Coraline somehow walks up the drawing of the porch steps. The marbles click in her pocket against the stone with the hole in it, the cat presses itself against her.

(CONTINUED)

She gets to the front door — now just a small child's SCRAWL of a door — and she pushes her hand against it.

The drawing of a door SWINGS OPEN, and Coraline and the cat go through.

INT. OTHER HOUSE HALLWAY - SAME

The inside of the other house has only changed a little. It still has depth, and shadows, and someone who stands hidden in the shadows waiting for Coraline to return.

OTHER MOTHER
(unseen)
So you're back

She does not sound pleased.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
And you brought vermin with you.

CORALINE
No, I brought a friend.

She can feel the cat stiffening under her hands, as if it were anxious to be away.

OTHER MOTHER
(flatly)
You know I love you.

CORALINE
Then you have a very funny way of showing it.

She walks down the hallway, step by steady step, pretending she can't feel the other mother's blank black eyes on her. She turns into the living room.

INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM - SAME

The fruit painting still hangs on the wall but now its fruit HAS BEEN EATEN. The lion-pawed wooden table RAKES THE CARPET impatiently. At the end of the room, in the corner, stands the locked wooden door. It seems to BREATHE HEAVILY. The windows shows nothing but mist.

This is it, Coraline knows. The moment of truth. The unraveling time.

The Other Mother steps between Coraline and the mantelpiece looking down at her with GLINTING button eyes. Dressed all in BLACK, she's TALLER now, as pale as GLASS NOODLES.

CONTINUED:

Her hair WRITHES AND TWINES and her LONG TEETH and FINGERNAILS are SHARP AS KNIVES. She has nourished herself on her own world, as a spider EATS ITS WEB when no flies have been caught.

OTHER MOTHER
(sharply)
Well? Where are they?

Coraline puts her right hand into her pocket and pulls out the three glass marbles. They're a frosted grey, and they clink together in the palm of her hand.

The Other Mother SUDDENLY GRABS for them, but Coraline is quicker, yanking them away then slipping them back into her pocket. She looks up at the Other Mother with furrowed brows and juts her jaw.

CORALINE
Hold on. We aren't finished yet, are we?

The Other Mother looks daggers, but then she smiles sweetly.

OTHER MOTHER
No, I suppose not. After all, you still need to find your parents, don't you?

CORALINE
Yes.

OTHER MOTHER
Well? Produce them. Would you like to look in the cellar again? I have some new things hidden down there.

CORALINE
No, I...

Coraline stalls for time, not having a clue where her parents might be.

CORALINE (cont'd)
...I know where my parents are.

The cat is heavy in her arms. She moves it forward a little, UNHOOKING its claws from her shoulder.

OTHER MOTHER
Where?

CORALINE
It seems that since I've looked everywhere you'd hide them, they aren't in the house.

The Other Mother stands perfectly still, giving nothing away, lips tightly closed. Even her hair STOPS MOVING.

CORALINE (cont'd)
So...

Coraline's hands are wrapped FIRMLY around the black cat. She has a plan, if *only she can find her parents!*

CORALINE (cont'd)
...I know where they have to be. You've hidden them in the passageway between the houses, haven't you? They are behind that door.

She nods her head toward the BREATHING DOOR in the corner.

The Other Mother remains STATUE-STILL, but a HINT of a smile creeps onto her face.

OTHER MOTHER
Oh, they are, are they?

CORALINE
(very sincere)
Why don't you open it? They'll be there, all right.

The Other Mother drops her gaze and reaches her hand slowly into her apron pocket.

The cat STIRS uncomfortably in Coraline's arms. She thinks at it with all her might:

CORALINE (V.O.) (cont'd)
I promised I'd get us home, and I will, but we have to find Mom and Dad right now, right this minute!

The cat RELAXES ever-so-slightly and then his ears suddenly twitch, hearing something. Then Coraline hears it, too: the very faintest of chirps, like a sad little bird, like a *fingertip on wet glass.*

The Other Mother, deaf to the sound, produces the black iron key and turns.

And now, Coraline SEES what she missed before. A BALL OF GLASS, on the mantle above the fireplace. Filled with water and floating bits of SNOW and TWO TINY STIFF FIGURES. She forces her eyes away.

The Other Mother walks over to the door, and pushes the key into the lock. The breathing door RELAXES.

She turns the key.

Coraline hears the mechanism clunk, heavily. She is already starting, as quietly as she can, to move sideways toward the mantelpiece.

The Other Mother PUSHES down on the door handle, and PULLS open the door, revealing the DARK EMPTY CORRIDOR behind it.

OTHER MOTHER
There.

She waves her hands at the corridor, her delighted expression MONSTROUS.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
You're wrong! You don't know where your parents are, do you? They aren't there.

She turns and looks at Coraline.

OTHER MOTHER (cont'd)
Now you're going to stay here forever.

CORALINE
No, I'm not.

And, hard as she can, she THROWS THE BLACK CAT at the OTHER MOTHER. It yowls, and lands RIGHT ON THE OTHER MOTHER'S HEAD, claws flailing, teeth bared, FIERCE AND ANGRY.

Coraline reaches to the mantel and GRABS THE SNOW GLOBE with the TINY FIGURES inside that are HER IMPRISONED PARENTS. She pushes it into her dressing gown pocket.

The cat makes a deep, ULULATING HOWL and BITES into the Other Mother's CHEEK. Instead of blood, tendrils of INK-BLACK SMOKE seep from the wound. The Other Mother FLAILS WILDLY at the clinging cat as her face starts to SINK IN. Coraline RUNS for the door.

She pulls THE KEY out of the lock.

CORALINE (cont'd)
(shouts)
Leave her! Come on!

The cat hisses, and RAKES its claws across the Other Mother's NOSE which COLLAPSES, SPEWING SMOKE. Then he SPRINGS DOWN toward Coraline.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Quickly!

The cat RUNS toward her, and they both step into the dark corridor.

INT. PASSAGEWAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

It's BITTER COLD. The cat backs up a step, then looks behind.

ANGLE ON OTHER MOTHER

COLLAPSING and WEAKENED, she manages to get her bearings and begins to COME at us.

BACK ON CAT AND CORALINE

The cat runs to Coraline's legs and she begins to PULL the door closed.

It's HEAVIER than ever. She manages to get it almost closed when she FEELS THE OTHER MOTHER start to PULL AGAINST HER. BLACK SMOKE SEEPS AROUND THE DOOR EDGES.

CORALINE
Come on, please shut!

VOICES MURMUR behind her in the corridor. She glances back: THE GHOST CHILDREN!

Too ephemeral to touch the door, they cheer Coraline on as she pulls on the iron handle:

1ST GHOST
Never give up, Miss! Hold strong! Hold strong!

2ND AND 3RD GHOSTS
Pull, girl, pull!

And then she hears the voice of her REAL MOTHER — her own, wonderful, maddening, infuriating, glorious mother, call to her from the snow globe, glowing in her pocket:

CORALINE'S MOTHER (V.O.)
Good job, Coraline!

And that is enough.

The door STARTS TO SHUT. The Other Mother SNATCHES DESPERATELY at Coraline, reaching through the closing gap. She SCREAMS, her voice no longer human.

CONTINUED:

OTHER MOTHER
NOOOOO!

The door SLOWS, STOPS, and begins to OPEN ONCE MORE.

CORALINE
(struggling)
WE'RE GOING TO GO HOME. WE ARE. HELP ME PLEASE, ALL OF YOU!

The CLAWED FINGERS SNATCH CLOSER.

Then the ghost children's fluttery hands REACH INSIDE CORALINE'S, and her STRENGTH IS DOUBLED. There is a final moment of resistance, SOMETHING CAUGHT in the door, and then, with a CRUNCH AND A CRASH, the WOODEN DOOR SHUTS.

BLACK. SOMETHING INJURED falls to the floor and lands with a scuttling thump...

CAT
Come on! This is not a good place to be in. Quickly.

Coraline turns her back on the door and BEGINS TO RUN, sliding her hand along the wall to keep steady in the dark.

FRIGID WINDS HOWL and the slimy corridor seems to COME ALIVE and ANGLE UPHILL and GROW LONGER AND LONGER.

She can HALF-SEE the three ghost children, as faintly GLOWING PATCHES, ahead of her. She can hear the cat, too, PADDING in the dark in front of her.

And then the INJURED THING scuttles between her feet. She stumbles badly but doesn't fall. The CORRIDOR is deep, and slow, and it KNOWS THAT SHE IS THERE.

Then DAYLIGHT APPEARS, and Coraline runs toward it, panting.

CORALINE
(calling)
ALMOST THERE!

But the GLOWING PATCHES, the three children, ARE GONE. Wheezing, she STAGGERS THROUGH THE DOOR ...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

... and SLAMS IT behind her with the LOUDEST, MOST SATISFYING BANG you can imagine.

(CONTINUED)

Coraline WHIPS OUT THE KEY, LOCKS THE DOOR, then puts it back in her pocket. Three beats later, her WONDERFULLY REAL MOTHER calls to her.

CORALINE'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Coraline? We're home, dear.

Her true parents, smiling true smiles, walk into the room. There's a *light dusting of snow on their shoulders and hair.*

CORALINE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Oh, here you are. What was that great crashing sound?

FATHER
And why was a cat in the house? Shot out the front door like a bullet.

Coraline's not sure what they know.

CORALINE
Chasing mice?

Then she throws her arms around her parents and hugs them so tightly her arms begin to ache.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Mom, Dad, I'm so happy you're back.

MOTHER
You smell sweaty ... but nice.

Mom steps back to look at her, spots her bloody knee.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
What did you do to your poor knee?

CORALINE
There was this huge rotten pumpkin that made me trip.

Her father bends over and she lets him rub his nose against hers.

FATHER
(singsong)
Pumpkin soup and pumpkin pies and pumpkin ice cream, shakes and fries!

She makes a disgusted face. He stands.

FATHER (cont'd)
Got any better ideas for dinner tonight?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Pick something special, Coraline, we're celebrating!

CORALINE'S FATHER
Hear hear!

Barry takes Karen by the arms and starts to dance her around the room. Coraline gushes:

CORALINE
I missed you so much! When you didn't come home, I--

CORALINE'S FATHER
(ignoring)
It was your brilliant pruning, Karen.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Nonsense, Barry, I had miracle-grown prose to work with.

Coraline, confused, takes a stab.

CORALINE
Your garden catalog ... they liked your garden catalog?

BOTH PARENTS
They loved it.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
In fact, we're taking a vacation.

CORALINE
Where?

Dad dips Mom over.

CORALINE'S FATHER
Right here, right now. A few days to fool around in the garden, do some planting, go see a play - whatever you want.

Mom dips Dad; almost drops him.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Just till school.

Coraline tries once more to find out what they know.

CONTINUED: (3)

CORALINE
But where did the snow on your...?

But the snow on their shoulders has melted away without a trace. She shrugs: apparently they don't remember anything!

CUT TO:

CORALINE'S ROOM - SAME

The curtains are closed against bright sun. Coraline shakes the empty snow globe and puts it on her dresser, watching the swirling snow fall, covering the place where the little couple stood. Beside the globe are the three marbles, CRACKED OPEN like empty shells in a bird's nest; the stone with a hole in it; and the black key.

She takes some string from her toy box, threads it through the key, then ties it around her neck. She hides the key beneath her shirt against her chest.

OUTSIDE, one of the Scotties begins to BARK furiously at something. Then it YELPS in pain and whimpers.

Puzzled, Coraline goes to her window, pulls open the curtains and GASPS.

THERE ON HER WINDOW LEDGE — BONE-WHITE, RED-CLAWED, LEAKING BLACK SMOKE — **IS THE BELDAM'S RIGHT HAND**

It TAPS one nail against the glass, POINTING to her.

THE KEY! Her right hand FLIES to her chest, her left fist POUNDS the window glass. The SEVERED HAND LEAPS onto a GUTTER and scuttles INSIDE A DOWNSPOUT.

PUSH IN on Coraline, head shaking in disbelief, temples pounding, wide eyes staring out the window. A desperate idea flickers behind her eyes, grows, her brow slowly knits, and then she solemnly nods. SHE HAS A PLAN.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD ESTATE HOUSE GROUNDS, FAIRY CIRCLE - SAME

Continually glancing around, Coraline lifts the heavy planks off the old well, one by one, grunting and sweating, and drags them behind some trees.

She pulls up the last plank and pauses to look down into the damp, deep hole in the ground, the bricks greenish and slippery. She starts to feel dizzy when a rustling sound snaps her head around. Just a scrub jay in a bush...

(CONTINUED)

She opens a cardboard box and takes out a checked tablecloth, her old plastic dolls, a jug of water and a set of doll's cups and saucers.

Coraline spreads the table cloth carefully over the well then puts a cup and saucer every foot or so at the edges, weighting each one with water.

She puts a doll in the grass beside each cup, wipes her brow, takes a last look at the HAND TRAP, and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD ESTATE HOUSE - SAME

POV looking up to copper downspout where hand disappeared, following it down to where it joins a horizontal pipe, moving left then down another pipe that ends by the entrance to Misses Spink and Forcible's apartment.

Reverse on Coraline. Good, she nods. Wearing an old, too small party dress, she knocks on the door. Miss Spink opens it, holding a freshly bandaged dog.

MISS SPINK
Hello Caroline, dear.

CORALINE
Still Coraline, Miss Spink.
(nods to dog)
How's Hamish doing?

MISS SPINK
(sighs)
Luckily, the cut doesn't seem to be too deep. We cannot imagine what could have done it. Mister Bobo says he thinks it might have been a weasel.

CORALINE
Mister Bobo?

MISS SPINK
The man in the top flat. Mister Bobo. Fine old circus family I believe. Romanian, or Slovenian, or Livonian, or one of those countries. Bless me, I can never remember them any more.

Coraline smiles at the name 'Bobo", then, remembering her mission, kneels down and speaks loudly near the downspout opening.

CONTINUED:

CORALINE
Well, I'm going to go and play with my dolls now, over by the old tennis courts, around the back.

MISS SPINK
That's nice dear. Make sure you keep an eye out for the old well...

Alarmed, Coraline slams her hand across the opening.

MISS SPINK (cont'd)
...the Lovat boy said he thought it might go down a half a mile or more.

Coraline snatches the key string from around her neck and, like bait on a hook, swings it back and forth, TAPPING the key against the downspout.

CORALINE
(even louder)
THIS KEY? OH, IT'S JUST SOME OLD KEY FROM OUR HOUSE. IT'S PART OF MY GAME. THAT'S WHY I'M CARRYING IT AROUND WITH ME ON THIS PIECE OF STRING. WELL, GOODBYE NOW.

Coraline puts her ear to the spout. The HAND, clacking and scraping inside the pipes, HAS HEARD HER! She straightens, turns and SCAMPERS up the steps. Miss Spink speaks to Hamish as she closes the door:

MISS SPINK
What an extraordinary child...

CUT TO:

EXT. ESTATE HOUSE GROUNDS - SAME

Coraline ambles toward the old tennis courts, DANGLING AND SWINGING the black key on its piece of string.

She glimpses something the color of bleached bone SPIDER-CREEPING in the undergrowth and SHUDDERS. The HAND IS KEEPING PACE with her, about thirty feet away. She sings out loud, a song her father made up for her when she was little.

CORALINE
Oh.... my twitchy witchy girl,
I think you are so nice,
I give you bowls of porridge
And I give you bowls of ice
Cream.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORALINE (cont'd)
I give you lots of kisses,
And I give you lots of hugs,
But I never give you sandwiches
With grease and worms and mung
Beans.

She saunters through the woods and her voice hardly trembles at all.

NEW ANGLE ON CORALINE THROUGH FOLIAGE, PAN TO THE HAND AND BACK

SOMEONE ELSE watches UNSEEN from the far side, GLIDING along SILENTLY...

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIRY CIRCLE - SAME

The tea-party is just as she left it, the tablecloth taut over the hidden well. Now comes the tough part.

CORALINE
(loud and bright)
Hello dolls. It's tea-time! To make sure we have a really great picnic, I brought the lucky key.

Holds it up for pretend applause. She leans over the table cloth and, aiming carefully, swings it towards the center and lets go. The key lands safely RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE.

She turns to her dolls.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Who'd like a piece of delicious chocolate cake? Emma? Pinky? Stephanie?

She serves each doll a slice of invisible cake. Past the BIG STUMP, from the corner of her eye, she spots the BONE WHITE HAND SCAMPERING behind one tree trunk to another, closer and closer. She forces herself not to look at it.

CORALINE (cont'd)
Emma! What a clumsy girl you are! You've dropped your cake! Now I'll have to go over and get you a whole new slice!

NEW ANGLE THROUGH BERRY BRAMBLES ON CORALINE

THE WATCHER sees Coraline walk around the circle of dolls to the opposite side from the stump. She pretends to clean up spilled cake, and to get Emma another piece.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RESUME PREVIOUS ANGLES

And then the HAND COMES! Running high on its fingers, it SCRABBLES through the tall grass in a skittering rush and HOPS onto the tree stump. It STANDS THERE for a moment, like a crab tasting the air, and then it makes ONE TRIUMPHANT, NAIL-CLACKING LEAP onto the center of the table-cloth.

TIME SHIFTS TO SLOW MOTION. The white fingers close around the black key...

The TABLECLOTH SAGS from the weight, PULLED towards its center, doll's cups SWAYING. Then, the unimaginable happens: IT STOPS!

The HAND, pinching the key, REGAINS IT'S BALANCE, TURNS TO CORALINE, and CROUCHES down to SPRING INTO HER FACE. She RAISES HER HANDS to SHIELD HER EYES when:

OUT OF NOWHERE, WYBIE LOVAT COMES FLYING INTO VIEW on his electric scooter. He GUNS THE THROTTLE, JUMPS THE WELL, and SLAMS A BRICK STRAIGHT DOWN ON THE HAND!

The DOLLS' CUPS FLY, and the TABLECLOTH and the KEY and the OTHER MOTHER'S RIGHT HAND GO TUMBLING DOWN WITH THE BRICK INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE WELL.

INT. WELL - CONTINUOUS

PULL BACK WITH FALLING HAND on the shrinking sky and Coraline as TIME SPEEDS UP. We hear her count, FASTER AND FASTER, and, because the well is so deep, STARS start to appear in a DARKENED DAY SKY. We hit the water as Coraline reaches:

CORALINE (CONT'D)
FORTY...

The number is spoken at normal speed, it lingers and echoes with the SPLASH.

EXT. WELL - CONTINUOUS

MUFFLED SPLASH, long way below. After a beat, Coraline looks up to Wybie, who rolls slowly towards her on his scooter. Picture and sound are normal speed again.

He takes a bent old photo from his pocket and shows it to Coraline. There are TWO YOUNG GIRLS dressed in old-fashioned clothing. One holds the CORN HUSK DOLL which looks just like her. And she looks just like the sweet GHOST GIRL from behind the mirror. Coraline nods and Wybie spiels.

WYBIE
After you chased me out of the house, Gran showed me this. It's her and her sister, of course. The one that, uh, disappeared? I told her, "Stop, Gran, I smell what you're stepping in, but where's the science? Can't be the same doll I gave my friend."

Coraline likes the friend reference.

WYBIE (cont'd)
Well Gran started knuckling my skull to the point where my mind began to open. So when the cat finally showed up, I told him you were in a bad way. It was like he understood me exactly cause the next thing he did was take off again and head over to your place. I followed along and watched him sneak in.

Coraline acknowledges this with a nod.

WYBIE (cont'd)
Since then, I've, uh, just been lying low, keeping an eye on things, you know, in case something happened. I'm, uh, really sorry I didn't believe you before, Coraline.

Her name, her real name!

WYBIE (cont'd)
Of course, when I saw that--
(jerks chin to well)
--nasty, bad-sick, creepy crawling hand thing, I knew it was all tru—

She clamps a hand over his mouth and hugs him tight.

CORALINE
Wybie, you're good jam times a million...

His incredibly bad posture goes straight as a post. He smiles hugely, burning red.

CUT TO:

INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Coraline lies in bed, bathed, teeth brushed, hair shining. Warm fresh air fills the room through her wide-open window and curtains.

Her mother and father discuss tomorrow's plans with her.

CORALINE
Remember to wake me?

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Crack of dawn. And I loved your idea of planting nothing but red, yellow and orange tulip bulbs.

CORALINE'S FATHER
Bought every dang one they had in town.

They bend down and kiss her smiling face good-night.

At the door, her mother leaves a slim box on a chair.

CORALINE'S MOTHER
Something for the rose thorns, dear. Good-night.

They close her door.

Coraline springs to the chair and opens the box and grins. It's a pair of DAY-GLO GREEN GARDENING GLOVES. She pulls one on to admire when, the BLACK CAT, back-lit by the moon, appears on the windowsill.

CORALINE
Oh, hello again.

She walks over to the window.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Are you still angry?

The rich moonlight brushes every hair on the cat's head, turning each white whisker to silver. She slowly reaches out to him.

CORALINE (cont'd)
I'm sorry, but I had to throw you at the beldam. It was the only way to get us all out. She would never have kept her word, would she?

The cat looks up at her, blinks, then he rests his head on her hand, licking her fingers with its sandpapery tongue. He begins to purr.

She picks him up and takes him to her bed. She rests her head on her pillow, the cat by her side, and stares at the ceiling with a smile.

CONTINUED: (2)

Coraline imagines she sees (and we *do* see) the ghost children, playing in a deep green meadow, running and shouting and tossing a GLITTERING BALL from one to another. They come to a small wooden bridge over a stream. Beyond the bridge a TWILIGHT SKY shines with VAN GOGH STARS. They turn and wave, and Coraline waves back. Image on ceiling fades.

Coraline allows herself to drift into sleep, and we pull away from her and her cat friend, out her window and up past Mr. Bobo's flat, where sweet, delicate music – the kind of music that can only be played on the tiniest silver trombones and trumpets and bassoons, on piccolos and tubas so small that their keys could only be pressed by the tiny pink fingers of magic jumping mice – spills out onto the warm evening air, telling the world that the summer is almost done.

END